



Listening Learning Leading

Low Emissions Strategy 2016

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of a consultation which asked for views on proposals to tackle the problem of vehicle emissions in South Oxfordshire

JULY 2016

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
BACKGROUND TO THE CONSULTATION	2
CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY	3
CONSULTATION RESPONSES	4
HOW WE HAVE USED RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION	26
FURTHER INFORMATION	27
APPENDIX A	28

SUMMARY

This report summarises a consultation undertaken by South Oxfordshire District Council which asked for views on proposals to tackle the problem of vehicle emissions in the district.

The proposals were intended to help the council improve air quality in the district and meet commitments for managing high levels of air pollution previously identified in the towns of Henley, Watlington and Wallingford.

A draft strategy outlining the proposals was published on the council's website on 1 February 2016. The draft strategy was promoted widely and members of the public were encouraged to comment on it by completing an online survey or a paper form made available on request. The consultation ran for nearly two months to 29 March.

217 people responded to the consultation.

The consultation found that:

- There was majority support for all of the proposals
- The proposal to encourage drivers to turn vehicle engines off when stationary attracted many supportive comments, although some were sceptical about its impact or practicality for drivers of older cars
- Many respondents thought more could be done to promote alternatives to car use
- There were mixed feelings about the strategy's proposal to increase the use of electric cars. Whilst many felt this was a desirable outcome, there were concerns about the provision of charging stations and limitations of existing technology
- Some concerns were raised over proposals to restrict vehicular access to the bridge in Wallingford and also the removal of on-street parking in parts of Watlington
- Eleven people complained there were no specific measures proposed for Henley

Council officers have reviewed feedback from the consultation and made responses throughout this report. The strategy is recommended to councillors for adoption as council policy.

BACKGROUND TO THE CONSULTATION

In 2015 South Oxford District Council adopted an Air Quality Action Plan which set out how we would seek to address known air quality problems in Henley, Wallingford and Watlington designated as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's). Further information on the outcomes of this original plan can be found on our website: <https://oxfordshire.air-quality.info/local-air-quality-management/south-oxfordshire>

One of the recommendations of the Air Quality Action Plan was to put together a more detailed Low Emission Strategy (LES) that would look at what low emission measures realistically could be implemented to improve air quality in each of the AQMAs, but also the district as a whole. Previously low emission strategies have been focused in large cities so it was important to carry out detailed modelling to investigate what might work in a more rural setting.

After a successful government bid to DEFRA, the council commissioned environmental experts Ricardo-AEA to undertake feasibility studies and prepare the strategy.

The experts recommended the council consider five broad policies for improving air quality in the district as well as three specific actions that could be taken in Wallingford and Watlington. These incorporated some earlier proposals made in the original Air Quality Action Plan with new proposals for Wallingford and Watlington. As a result of the modelling of the low emission measures, additional actions were considered unviable for Henley as the results highlighted any potential improvements to air quality would be negligible.

We consulted on the strategy between February and March 2016 to see whether residents supported the proposals made by the experts. This consultation summary provides an account of the feedback we received, as well as our responses to the main comments, issues and suggestions raised.

CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

The draft Low Emissions Strategy was published on the council's website on 1 February 2016. We sought to draw this to the attention of residents using press releases, social media and dedicated correspondence sent to people who'd previously registered an interest in council consultations. We also contacted groups in the Henley, Wallingford and Watlington who we thought would have an interest in the actions being proposed.

To consult people on the draft strategy we set up an online survey. The survey asked respondents how much they supported each proposal and if they had any specific comments to make. A copy of the question wording used is shown in Appendix A.

To ensure the consultation was accessible to people who might have found it difficult to complete the online survey we made paper forms available on request.

The consultation lasted for nearly two months and closed for public comment on 29 March. During the consultation period, council officers met with members from Wallingford and Watlington town councils to listen to their comments.

To make sense of the feedback received, we employed two types of analysis. In the first instance we looked at the headline quantitative measures of agreement with each of the strategy's proposals. This was followed by coding of the free text comments to help understand the sentiment behind respondents' agreement or disagreement with each of the policies. The codes we generated identified frequently mentioned ideas, suggestions and issues. The findings of the consultation are set out in the next section of this report.

The consultation was conducted in full compliance with the council's Customer Engagement Charter¹ which sets out our commitments for work of this nature.

¹ <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/about-us/have-your-say/our-commitments-engaging-customers>

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

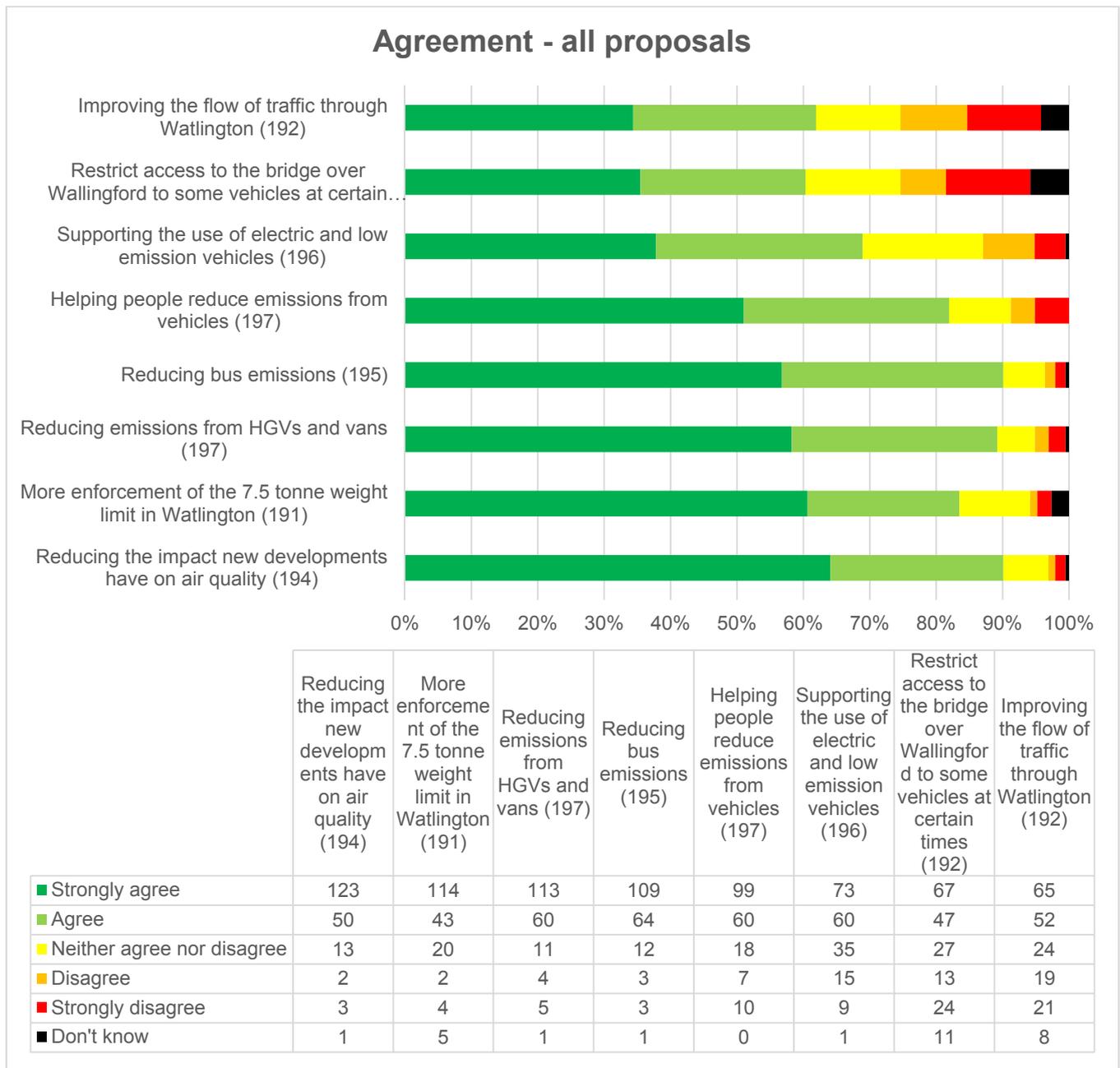
217 people and organisations responded to the survey. This excludes 4 responses which were removed as they appeared to be duplicate responses.

Responses shown in this section are presented anonymously except where they were made on behalf of a group or organisation. We have responded to most comments and these are shown in the text boxes.

Overall agreement with proposals

To provide a top line indication of support for the draft strategy, we asked respondents to tell us the extent to which they supported each of the proposed policies. Most respondents provided this information.

We found that most respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with all proposals made in the draft strategy (Figure 1).



Reducing the impact new developments have on air quality had the greatest level of support (64 per cent agreed with the proposal), followed by more enforcement of the 7.5 tonne weight limit in Watlington (61 per cent) and measures to reduce emissions from HGVs and vans (58 per cent).

Improving the flow of traffic through Watlington and restricting vehicular access to the bridge in Wallingford were more controversial. About one in five respondents said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with these proposals. Further analysis shows that of the 44 respondents who said they lived in Watlington, 25 disagreed with the proposal to improve traffic flow through their town suggesting that resistance to this proposal is higher amongst residents.

Detailed comments

Respondents were also asked if they had any further comments or suggestions to make on the strategy generally, and in relation to each policy. The information provided below picks up on the key themes that ran throughout these free text comments. We have reported on the most common themes which are shaded in grey and provided an officer response where appropriate.

GENERAL REMARKS ABOUT THE STRATEGY

We asked people if they had any general comments to make about the draft strategy as a whole. The most frequently made remarks not related to specific proposals were; support for the strategy, concerns that there were no specific proposals made to address air quality in Henley and a view that sustaining and improving bus services will also help to reduce vehicle emissions in the district.

Comment type	Frequency
Support for strategy	11
No plans for Henley	11
Maintain bus services	10
Air pollution evidence	9
Diesel vehicles	7

Support for strategy

Eleven people made comments in support of having a low emissions strategy for South Oxfordshire. These people welcomed measures that could be taken to improve air quality in the district.

It is very good that attention is being paid to this issue, and that an attempt is being made to evaluate the impact of various options (77)

I am aware that this is an important issue. Air pollution kills many times more people than for example road accidents. Yet, perhaps because the deaths are harder to attribute, it has not received much political attention. It is good to see South Oxfordshire starting to think about this (199)

However, there was some scepticism that the strategy would be enough to resolve the problem.

Yes you definitely need to do something about it, but I'm not sure the suggestions thus far go far enough to resolve the problems (172)

We welcome support for the plan and highlight the proposals were based on scientific modelling which indicated they would be effective in reducing air pollution.

No plans for Henley

There were also complaints that the draft strategy did not include specific proposals to address known air quality problems in Henley.

Extremely disappointed that Henley does not have any specific measures (158)

Ridiculous that experts cannot provide any resolutions to the EXTREME conditions that prevail in Henley-on-Thames. Something needs to be done urgently as these appalling conditions have existed for far too long (121)

Leaving out Henley from plans for remedial action because the situation is too difficult to ameliorate in the short term is an abrogation of responsibility. The very fact that Henley's air pollution problems seem intractable means that it should be given urgent attention (135)

The feasibility study undertaken by Ricardo-AEA highlighted that low emission bus or HGV measures would not have a significant impact on air quality in Henley and there were no viable rerouting options for traffic. Therefore no settlement specific measures were proposed in the strategy. We think the five general measures will have a positive impact on Henley as will the remaining measures in the air quality action plan. We want to stress that the low emission strategy is just one of the many actions laid out in the air quality action plan to help improve air quality.

Maintain bus services

A number of people said that they were worried about cuts to bus services as this would increase the use of cars and result in more vehicle emissions.

If our bus services are cut/curtailed more cars will be used i.e. more emissions (149)

I live in a place where the nearest bus stop is more than a mile away and the bus route (Wallingford to Henley) is due to close. This means I have to use my car for every journey and in most cases this means a trip into Wallingford. This means I am contributing to air pollution more than I would like (129)

This is an Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) function, however we will raise this issue with them drawing on the comments made and show our support for local bus services.

Air pollution evidence

There were also a few comments that made reference to the evidence use to justify the draft strategy. Specifically, several people challenged the phrasing of the consultation that vehicle emissions "could" damage health.

In the introduction, it states: 'vehicle emissions could damage health.' This is weak, as they definitely DO damage health (58)

You say "vehicle emissions could damage health". We know that vehicle emissions do damage health, so let's not pretend otherwise. (107)

The council is aware of the health effects of air pollution which is why this strategy and the air quality action plan were produced.

Diesel vehicles

A few people pointed out that diesel vehicles release more particulates into the air which causes a risk to health. They felt the strategy could do more to address this.

Diesel vehicles have to be restricted especially now that, given Kings College data, there is an impact on drivers in vehicles following diesel as well as pedestrians. Many cities have announced a strategy to ban diesel in the future (47)

Particulates are mostly caused by diesel engines, HGVs and cars. I cannot understand why this isn't already stated in order to get the HGV companies, Bus companies and [...] people to think about their next purchase (96)

Central Government is aware of the problems of diesel vehicles and there will be stricter emission limits in the future. Restricting diesel vehicles is not viable in small rural market towns as we do not have the transport infrastructure to support it.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMENTS

We asked for views on campaigns to get people turning off their engines when stationary and also encouraging alternatives to car use. The distribution of comments is shown in the table below.

Comment type	Frequency
Turning off engines when stationary	56
Alternatives to car use	24
- Use of buses	26
- Cycling	23
- Walking	12
Restrict vehicle access to town centres	10
No confidence in proposals	10
Enforcement of proposals	7
Reduce speed limit in town centres	6
Park and ride into towns	5
Pedestrianisation	2

Turning engines off when stationary

Over 50 people made comments about turning vehicle engines off when stationary. It seems this was a proposal that most people could relate to. Many comments were supportive on the basis that encouraging this behaviour change could be a quick win in towns where traffic builds up.

Getting people to switch off their engines when stopped at traffic lights or in traffic queues would be a quick and simple win (114)

Switching off engines costs no-one anything, in fact saving money. So a few well-placed signs might make a difference (199)

A suggestion mentioned a few times was having countdown timers at traffic lights where cars are stationary for longer periods of time. It was believed this would remind drivers to turn their engines off.

At Wallingford in the centre, the waiting time is quite long. There could be a digital display saying how long before the next green light (123)

A simple sign at the traffic lights to remind people to switch off. Perhaps add how long the lights stay red for - so drivers know it is worth it (163)

That said, not everyone was in favour of the proposal. For example, some people pointed out that whilst modern cars are designed with stop start assistance, switching engines on and off in older cars may not save emissions or result in cars stalling and adding to traffic congestion.

It will be major change in the way people use their cars: many will not want to turn engines off in case they can't get started, or because they think it will cause delays (162)

We are pleased that proposals encouraging people to switch off car engines were widely supported.

Alternatives to car use (including bus services, cycling and walking)

Most comments were supportive of the strategy's proposal to promote alternatives to car use. There were frequent mentions of having a good bus service as well as a network of cycling and walking routes to make this viable.

You can only discourage people from using cars if there is a suitable alternative, e.g. good reliable public transport (24)

As an alternative to cars, walking, cycling and public transport should be encouraged. Local walking and cycling groups may be happy to help with this. As will the bus and rail companies. Often these work best in combination - e.g. cycling to the bus stop (199)

We need reliable alternatives to driving: regular bus services, [...] safe cycle routes. We also need well-lit level footpaths [...] from edge-of-town residential areas. We could consider too park and ride services and bikes for hire (58)

However, a number of respondents expressed concern with recent announcements by Oxfordshire County Council that it will reduce subsidies for bus services. They felt this conflicted with the aspiration of this proposal.

Use of alternatives to cars is not helped by OCC reducing bus services (67)

The cuts in rural bus services that will come into force from June conflict directly with the need to get people out of their cars and into alternatives to individual

car trips. This is not an SODC responsibility but highlights the need for joined up thinking by District and County Councils (170)

Some people also pointed out that alternative forms of transport are not always practical

I would love to give up my daily car run from Abingdon to Oxford, return. But the lack of safe cycling routes puts me off as I would have a 2-year old on the bike too. I need a 100% traffic free cycle route to feel safe when taking my 2-year old. Because there are 3 of us traveling every day it's cheaper and much quicker to use the car rather than the bus (146)

We are working with OCC to improve and promote alternatives to the car and the behavioural change proposal along with actions in our action plan are aimed at delivering this.

Restricting vehicular access to town centres

A handful of people felt that the strategy should also aim to discourage people from driving through town centres in the first place.

Reducing the number of cars and other vehicles in town would be much the best idea (113)

When you are sat in a car it is very difficult to see / understand the impact you are having on the street you are stop in, as most people want to get to where they are going quickly. Best option is to not let them in there in the first place (17)

Specific suggestions included the introduction of 20 mph speed limits and limiting access to electric vehicles only

A better approach would be to remove traffic queues (or better still traffic) in the South Oxfordshire town centres as not all drivers (in fact probably very few) will switch off their engines when stationary. This could be achieved by 20mph speed limits throughout the towns to discourage through traffic (59)

Restricting access to allow only electric vehicles would solve the problem straight away (73)

Due to local concerns over economic viability in the small towns within South Oxfordshire and the cost of enforcement, we would not look to restrict vehicle access to the towns at this time. Simply reducing speed limits through town centres does not always have the effect of reducing air pollution and with the issue in our three AQMA's being down to congestion it is unusual that vehicles even reach the current speed limits. Park and ride into the towns is a proposal we explored in the production of our air quality action plan, this is an OCC function and they stated that the idea would not be economically viable.

No confidence in proposals

About ten people felt actions encouraging behaviour change would have little impact.

People won't change their current practices (197)

ELECTRIC VEHICLE COMMENTS

The draft strategy's proposal to promote the use of electric vehicles split opinions. Some people seemed to support this whilst others doubted whether this kind of action would be practical or viable. As such, the majority of comments related to the need for charging stations, the cost of electric vehicles, the limitations of current technology and examples of where use of electric cars may or may not be appropriate.

Comment type	Frequency
Charging stations	23
Too expensive	23
Electric vehicle limitations	20
Electric or hybrid taxis and buses	19
No confidence in proposals	12
Urban/ rural considerations	11
Incentives	8
Subsidised parking for electric vehicles	5
EVs rely on dirty energy/ need to be fuelled by renewable sources	5
Electric car clubs	4
Council electric pool cars	3
Support for proposals	3
Proposals do not go far enough	2
Should be planning condition to support EVs	2
Electric vehicle only routes	2
Other vehicle technology	2
Reduce car use	2

Charging stations

One of the most frequently made comments was about the need for sufficient charging electric stations. Many people thought these should be provided in council car parks.

There needs to be very many more charging points throughout the county (171)

I'd like SODC to ensure there is a charging point for electric cars in every public car park with more than 20 spaces (71)

We'd need charging points in all the carparks, and what about the street-side charging points that Oxford are putting in? (70)

A few of these people suggested that parking for electric cars should also be subsidised to encourage greater use.

Provide reduced rate parking and charge points (148)

One person stressed that charging points should be supplied with energy from renewable sources

Adequate points will be required to charge these vehicles. Provided by sustainable power (176)

In contrast, a couple of people questioned whether there would be space to accommodate charging points in towns, or whether local traffic would need them at all.

In principal a good idea, but there are far too few parking spaces in Wallingford already, so allocating some for charging is not realistic.

Local traffic will not need charging stations and through traffic will not use them (11)

SODC have already agreed the first two council funded charging points in car parks, works to install these in appropriate locations are currently underway, parking whilst charging will be made free.

SODC also require the installations of EV charging points on many new developments.

We are committed to ensure the roll out of EV charging points throughout the district as laid out in our air quality action plan.

Too expensive

The main concern, expressed by 23 respondents was the cost of electric cars. In the first instance, some people felt the cost of electric cars means they are beyond the reach of most people.

Most people cannot afford these cars (37)

This would discriminate against those who can't afford new cars (106)

I would love to change my car for an electric car but the price is well out of my range. I am planning on buying a new car now and just can't afford the electric range. Further financial incentives are needed. I would get one in an instant if I could afford to (146)

Respondents were also concerned that it would be expensive for the council to provide the necessary infrastructure (i.e. charging stations).

But who is going to pick up the cost of installing this capability? (26)

I would suggest that this is a high investment strategy, both for the council in installing sufficient charging points, and in terms of people buying new vehicles. For this reason, while electric technology can be promoted, this should not be a mainstay of the strategy (77)

As with all new technologies the price starts high and continues to drop as demand and competition grow. The government offers grants for EV vehicle purchase.

As mentioned above the council are beginning to roll out EV charging points throughout the district via public car parks and new developments. This is also a goal of the county council.

Electric vehicle limitations (especially in rural areas)

Some respondents also felt that electric car technology isn't developed enough to make it a practical and viable mode of transport. Almost all concerns related to the availability of charging points and the range of vehicles.

Electric cars have too limited a range at the moment, along with very few "re-charging" stations (125)

Short distances can be accessed by electric cars but one would need another car for long distances, thus making the idea unfeasible, at least at the moment (8)

The technology for electric vehicles is just not practical yet. Charging times (not the availability of charging points) & range are still major negatives stopping their useful, widespread, adoption (39)

Some respondents also noted that these limitations represent a particular challenge for rural parts of South Oxfordshire where journeys are likely to be longer or where it may be unrealistic to provide good coverage of charging points.

A move towards less polluting vehicles is positive, but the use of electric vehicles for residents of rural areas, where the typical trip to nearby towns for shopping or employment will involve a round trip distance of 30 or 40 miles, is likely to be limited. This is particularly the case for those commuting daily to work, where for many of the current electric vehicles this will involve a daily recharge (170)

The technology is still not good enough for rural locations! In cities there are multiple charging points, but in market towns and villages there are none/few, and few locations for them (10)

EV's currently have a range of around 80-100 miles and some up to 200+ which is further than the majority of people travel in one day. Many also have range extenders fitted allowing for a longer distance to be achieved via traditional fuel. As technology improves the range of such vehicles will also improve.

Electric or hybrid taxis and buses

There was however support for encouraging bus and taxi companies to use electric vehicles.

Do encourage buses/taxis/public transport to use electric (48)

Local taxis sit in the Market Square with their engines running at all times. Most of the cars are diesels. Perhaps to obtain a taxi licence, they should only be given to electric/hybrid vehicles (72)

Provided they are safe (noise emitted to make pedestrians aware) taxis and buses should be discouraged from using diesels due to their particulate emissions, and encouraged to use electric/hybrid (128)

That said, a couple of people questioned whether the council would be able to get local companies to make this change.

How are you going to get taxis to cooperate? (203)

Great if you can get taxis to sign up to this (115)

The council already incentivises taxis to go green with graduated licence fees. Please see the following link for fees:
<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/South%20Oxfordshire%20taxi%20fees%20and%20charges%202014-15.pdf>

The council will work with OCC to help clean up the bus fleet.

No confidence in proposals

There were a few comments where people expressed a lack of confidence in the proposals

It would take a LONG time for enough people to convert to [electric cars to] make any difference (4)

I don't feel as though you can make people/businesses change their cars but you can always try (105)

HGV AND VANS COMMENTS

Most comments related to a perceived needs to restrict HGV access to town centres, however there were a number of comments that related to the draft strategy's proposals to have more enforcement of weight restriction zones and rerouting commercial sat nav devices to avoid areas with air pollution.

Comment type	Frequency
Restrict HGV access	18
Enforcement	16
Satnav rerouting	15
Delivery and service plans (inc. freight planning and places to transfer deliveries)	9
No confidence in proposals	6
Support	6
National policy needs to change	5
Home deliveries	4
May more air quality problems elsewhere	3
Cleaner HGVs	3
Non-HGV traffic bigger problem	3
Damage to roads and buildings	2
Delivery times	2
Low emissions zone	2
HGVs main polluters	2

Restrict HGV access to town centres

Most comments were in favour of restricting access to HGVs in Henley, Watlington and Wallingford.

Strongly support this idea. HGVs should not come through our small towns. There needs to be regulation and enforcement (162)

There should be no need for any HGV to pass through the traffic lights in the centre of town (97)

We have discussed the issue of restricting HGV access to towns with OCC and due to reasons of economics and lack of other suitable routes this is not an option they can consider.

Enforcement of Weight Restriction Zones

But, many respondents recognised that restricting HGV access to town centres needs to be effectively enforced for behaviour change to result.

The weight limits for HGVs need to be enforced effectively (55)

Without unavoidable enforcement these proposals will make little difference (19)

Enforcement of weight limits and checks on destinations and issuing on the spot fines is the only answer (21)

Stricter enforcement of WRZ's is proposed in our action plan and low emission strategy.

Satnav rerouting

Some respondents were particularly enthusiastic about proposals to work with the county council so that HGVs are rerouted via satellite navigation to avoid areas with poor air quality.

Could be practical and even save fuel for businesses by using intelligent routing. Usually the most polluted areas are those with the most restrictions on traffic flow, queuing traffic is an incredibly inefficient use of fuel & causes pollution (39)

Satnav amendment could be really useful. I often speak with foreign drivers who are upset that they have had to force their way through Watlington, they would rather not be there (33)

However, others questioned the viability of this proposal without the support of national government.

There is a problem with SatNavs, which are much more expensive for commercial vehicles than cars, so freight companies do not invest in them. Pressure is needed on Government and the companies to remove this disparity (120)

Satnav rerouting is proposed in our action plan and low emission strategy.

Council officers attend working groups where we feed information about issues and ideas directly to DEFRA which will influence national policies.

Delivery and service plans (inc. freight planning and places to transfer deliveries)

There were a couple of straightforward comments made in support of freight planning.

Freight journey planning is a good idea (193)

Freight journey planning might be workable (133)

More specifically, a few people suggested that it should be possible to set up a place outside of towns to transfer deliveries from HGV to smaller vans.

HGVs should deliver to depots on the fringes of towns, with smaller (and ideally electric) vehicles used for final deliveries to retail premises (59)

You could require businesses to collect their deliveries from lorry parks + storage containers outside towns. The towns could provide electric vans for local businesses to hire to do this (135)

These measures are already in our action plan and council officers are having preliminary discussions with OCC on the matter.

BUSSES COMMENTS

Respondents were broadly supportive of proposals to encourage bus operators to commit to stricter European emissions standards. The comments show there was interest in making sure bus engines are turned off when stationary, however some respondents were nervous about upgrading buses as they might make existing services unviable or have limited impact.

Comment type	Frequency
Turning engine off when stationary	25
Electric/ hybrid buses	14
Cuts to bus services	13
Examples of initiatives elsewhere	8
Provide subsidies to bus companies	8
New conditions may undermine the viability of bus services	8
How much impact?	7
Park and ride	5
Concern about age of buses	5
Doesn't it already happen?	4
Buses reduce use of cars	4
Support	3
Driver training	3
Should also apply to school buses	3
Not enough buses	3
Brexit (loss of EU emission standards)	2
Enforcement	2
Move bus stops out of town	2

Turning off engine when stationary

Following on from earlier comments about getting drivers to turn off their engines when stationary, over 20 respondents said this behaviour change should also apply to buses.

A lot could be achieved by action to stop bus engines running when standing in the town square and at traffic lights (187)

Bus drivers are the worst offenders - keeping their engines running when waiting at the stops. You would be amazed at the answers I has when I tackled them about this pollution (211)

However, three people noted they had already seen an improvement from bus companies in this respect.

Most buses do now turn their engines off if stopping for any length of time, which is an improvement (86)

The turning off of engines when stationary is a measure that is already in our air quality action plan.

Electric/ hybrid buses (and examples of initiatives elsewhere)

A number of respondents also felt that bus companies should be encouraged to invest in new technology such as electric or hybrid buses to reduce emissions.

Switch all buses to hybrid or electric. Current buses all seems a bit old and dirty (153)

Investigate electric/hybrid minibuses for less popular routes (81)

Reference was made to similar schemes in Oxford and Reading.

Oxford City has a ban on regular buses that do not conform to strict emissions standards [...] There is no reason why South Oxfordshire should not adopt these standards as well (120)

Reading Transport seem to be pioneers in this field using biofuels and low emission vehicles (210)

Electric and hybrid buses along with cuts to services is a topic we discuss with OCC who control buses.

The age of buses is an action we are working on with OCC and the bus operators as laid out in our air quality action plan.

Cuts to bus services

In contrast, some people felt that it would be difficult to encourage bus companies to commit to stricter European emissions standards in the context of OCC's withdrawal of subsidies for these services.

Many bus routes are about to be axed due to budget cuts. Additional costs to improve air quality at the expense of bus routes seems an unwise option (111)

At this time, where bus services are being cut due to lack of funding, it would be pointless to add further costs to bus services by imposing stricter standards (210)

New conditions may undermine viability of bus services

A few respondents went further and expressed concern that reduced bus services may mean more people end up travelling by car and therefore add to air quality problems in the district.

The removal of bus subsidies will necessitate more car journeys in rural areas which will sadly negate any improvements bus companies make in their emissions (21)

None of the actions in the strategy or our action plan affect the viability of bus services.

Provide subsidies to bus companies

In view of this, eight people said the council may need to consider subsidising improvements specified in the draft strategy.

Unless the Council will provide some sort of grant to the bus companies to invest in cleaner vehicles, it will not happen (152)

We will pass these comments to OCC who have responsibility for the bus services.

How much impact?

Several people questioned the impact that the proposals would make to improving air quality in the district. Nearly all of these respondents felt that buses are only a small part of the problem given the limited service offered.

There are so few bus routes left they can't make that much difference (110)

In Watlington there are so few services buses it is of little consideration (50)

The proposals are based on scientific modelling which shows they would be effective in reducing air pollution.

PLANNING AND PROCUREMENT COMMENTS

The comments detailed below demonstrate that whilst there are concerns about new development taking place, there is support for measures which will reduce impact on traffic congestion and air quality.

Comment type	Frequency
More housing means more pollution	20
Better walking and cycling routes	11
Developer guidance doesn't take into consideration cumulative impact	7
Make sure it happens	7
Car free developments	6
Infrastructure should be built first	6
Bypass for Watlington	5
Enforce it	4
Neighbourhood plan is useless	3
Better bus services	2

More housing means more pollution

A number of respondents pointed out that new developments are likely to increase congestion on local roads and contribute to air pollution.

More housing development will inevitably make for more pollution (55)

The reality is that more housing will generate more pollution, particularly in our area where people rely on cars to get around and where the ratio of cars to households is greater than 1:1 (90)

If you want lower air pollution, you cannot achieve this with lots more houses (160)

We have improved our policies for this through the low emission strategy, action plan and developer guidance in order to mitigate against the effects of additional housing as well as to encourage more sustainable development.

Better walking and cycling routes

Respondents also stressed the need for new developments to be well served by footpaths and cycle routes, thereby reducing new residents' dependency on car use.

Ensure cycling and walking are addressed in the earliest possible stages of the planning process, and require developers to put in good quality cycle paths (68)

All new developments should have active travel at their heart, making it convenient to walk and cycle and less convenient to drive (155)

Better walking and cycling routes are part of the developer guidance and something we are working with OCC to improve.

Developer doesn't take into consideration cumulative impact on emissions

Several people pointed out that existing SODC 'Guidance for Developers' only addresses the impact that a new development has on air quality in isolation. They stressed that the guidance should consider the cumulative impact developments have on air quality across a larger area.

The current SODC "Guidance for Developers" considers new developments in isolation, whereas there will be a cumulative effect on vehicle numbers and thus emissions. The new Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan must be allowed to consider the cumulative effects of new development on air quality (58)

The new Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan must be allowed to consider the cumulative effects of new development on air quality (107)

The developer guidance does take into consideration the cumulative impact of developments, this is laid out on page 3 bullet point 6, page 6 bullet point 5, page 7 bullet point 16 and also is a factor in the councils assessment of the reports and application.

Make sure it happens

Lastly, some people felt the council just needed to get on with making sure existing policies are enforced.

It would be very disappointing to learn that this was not already a significant factor in assessing planning applications (97)

It is important not only to have good policies in place but also to make sure that they are actually implemented (182)

Following the consultation of the strategy the council will vote on whether to adopt the strategy or not.

WALLINGFORD BRIDGE COMMENTS

Six out of every ten respondents said they supported proposals to restrict access to Wallingford Bridge. The comments help to explain why people were divided over this issue. They show that there were concerns about any knock on effects to traffic elsewhere and potential loss of tourism and trade to the town. There were also a number of additional suggestions for the town including restricting access to HGVs and introducing 20 mph speed limits.

Comment type	Frequency
May cause congestion elsewhere	19
Concern over economic impact	15
Ban HGVs/commercial vehicles	8
Enforcement/ number plate recognition cameras	8
Introduce 20mph speed limits	7
Trial restrictions to use of bridge	7
Re-phase traffic lights	6
Pedestrianise town centre	6
Create a park and ride	5
Make similar proposals for Henley bridge	5
Encourage cycling	4
Build footbridge / widen footpaths	4
Remind people to turn off engine whilst stationary	4
Make bridge one way	3
Improve signage	3
Resident exemption	2

May cause congestion elsewhere

19 people questioned whether restricting traffic flow over the bridge would result in increased traffic congestion elsewhere.

This will only move congestion around the town (5)

Specifically, some residents were worried that ‘rat runs’ would be created through some residential areas.

Restrictions on the bridge are unacceptable and if imposed would simply move traffic onto other entrances to the town, through residential areas (138)

I live in Norries Drive in Wallingford which is already a rat run coming from Didcot to get to Shillingford/Oxford anybody who knows the area coming from Didcot and gets to Slade Road roundabout are not going to go around the bypass to get to Shillingford/Oxford (217)

There were also concerns that the bypass would not be able to cope with more traffic during busy periods.

But there would be more traffic on the bypass. Probably queuing and air pollution would increase there (62)

In principle I agree, however, I can see this action merely moving the stationary traffic to the roundabouts situated in the Wallingford bypass road, which already struggle in rush hour (7)

Concerns that congestion would be caused elsewhere during the times the bridge is closed to cars is something that would be modelled and monitored in detail during pre-discussions and potential trials before the action would ever be completed.

Concern over economic impact

Some respondents also questioned the economic impact the proposals would have on the town. They suggested that visitors may be put off coming to the town and go to other more accessible towns instead.

Impact on town businesses near the bridge (restaurants/pubs/bars/etc.) must be considered (207)

Fewer people will visit the town from the east if the bridge cannot be used, reducing the income of local businesses (55)

[It will] put visitors off and reduce economy of town (203)

Concerns over economic impact would be considered. The proposed restrictions would only be at rush hours, which do not coincide with peak shopping hours so it is unlikely to effect the local shops.

Ban HGVs/ commercial vehicles

A few people felt that HGVs and commercial vehicles should be banned from using the bridge entirely or at least at specific times.

NO LORRIES OR VANS over bridge (203)

Would like to see all lorries and HGVs banned from bridge - they should use bypass to access to/from Wallingford (210)

It is not possible or viable to ban HGV's and commercial vehicles from the town centre as this would directly affect the economic viability of the town.

Enforcement/ number plate recognition cameras

There was recognition that enforcing restrictions relating to the use of the bridge might prove challenging. Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras were suggested as a potential solution.

The hardest issues here are communicating this restriction, enforcing them and recovering any penalties for access infringements (17)

Vehicle recognition software like the TAG system would facilitate charging [for use of the bridge] (86)

If this option is adopted, we will then consider all available enforcement methods.

Introduce 20mph speed limits

20mph speed limits were also posited as a deterrent for traffic cutting through the town rather than using the bypass.

It would be good to encourage more traffic to go around Wallingford rather than through it. [...] Maybe reducing the speeds through the town so it becomes clearly quicker to take the bypass? (199)

20mph speed limits do not always bring about the reduction in pollution people may think and can have the opposite effect. In Wallingford, because of congestion, it is very rare that people manage to reach the 30mph speed limit therefore a 20mph limit would have little impact on improving air quality.

Trial the restrictions to the use of the bridge

Finally, a few people expressed support for the strategy's proposal to trial restrictions to the use of the bridge before putting a permanent scheme in place.

We would support trying out restricting traffic on the bridge (58)

I agree that it should be investigated in more detail - particularly to see who would be most affected. There is an obvious danger that this measure would have a big impact on some and be no inconvenience at all to others (187)

As mentioned the bridge restrictions would be trialled and assessed before being imposed.

WATLINGTON TRAFFIC FLOW AGREEMENT

Improving the traffic flow through Watlington was another controversial proposal in the strategy. One in five respondents disagreed with this, and resistance was higher amongst residents responding to the consultation. The comments help to explain the concerns that some of these people have about the proposal. The need for alternative parking to be made available as well as enforcing speed limits were key issues.

Comment type	Frequency
Alternative parking required	21
Speed restrictions needed	21
Bypass needed	17
More enforcement is needed	16
May encourage more traffic	12
Traffic lights	6
Ban HGV's	5
One way system needed	3
Dorset model should be replicated	2
Want to see technical data	2

Alternative parking required

A number of people felt that alternative parking provision should be made for people who would no longer be able to park on the main street.

But where will the owners park their cars? (62)

Where would all the cars parked on the road go? Would the council provide a new car park/additional parking spaces for them otherwise they will just park and block all the back roads in the town (29)

Good idea, as long as other parking spaces are provided for residents (153)

Adequate arrangements would need to be made for alternative parking (176)

The logistics of alternative parking would be considered as part of the feasibility and trial.

Speed restrictions needed

There were also fears that if on-street parking were removed and traffic flow through the town improved, vehicles might be inclined to speed up.

I would like less parking in Watlington but this may mean traffic might exceed the speed limit (9)

Without parking traffic would speed! (23)

Freer roads would increase speed and traffic (87)

For this reason, several respondents felt that measures needed to be put in place to either enforce the existing speed limit or reduce it.

As long as traffic can't go faster as a result of fewer parked cars - need measures to slow it down (69)

Agree, but also put in a 20mph speed limit.

It is mainly a perception that cars speed through Watlington, the fact is with the relatively short length of road it is not possible for most cars to exceed the limit within the town. This is a factor that will be monitored should the on street parking be removed.

Bypass needed

17 people argued that building a by-pass around Watlington would be a more effective way of managing air pollution.

A bypass needs to be provided!! (203)

I believe we need to find a way to put in a bypass. The traffic situation has become almost intolerable during rush hours, and you can feel the effect as you breath in the toxic fumes (28)

The only solution is a bypass for Watlington funded by new housing and grants to improve air quality. At peak times most traffic is passing through (5)

OCC have stated there are no available funds to build a bypass for Watlington. Watlington would have to accept a large number of additional homes in order to fund a bypass.

More enforcement needed

A number of statements were made in support of enforcing the current weight restriction on vehicles passing through the town. This was an action proposed in the strategy and further comments are shown on page 26.

The weight limit needs to be enforced effectively (55)

Rather than make the high street no parking, enforce the 7.5tonne rule (179)

Additional enforcement of the WRZ is a measure in our action plan as well as the low emission strategy. This is something that is in OCC's remit and we are working with them on this issue.

May encourage more traffic

A dozen people felt that improving the traffic flow through the town could exacerbate existing traffic problems.

Better traffic flow could encourage more vehicles to use the route (81)

I feel it would cause increased traffic. I currently avoid Watlington because of the delays due to parked cars (9)

The other aspect of this solution is that if it does lead to an improvement of traffic flow the result may well be that a better travel experience for through traffic leads to a greater use of Watlington as a through route by all vehicle types including HGVs (159)

It is unknown as to whether this action may encourage more traffic through Watlington. However this is a proposal that would be trialled and assessed before implementation.

WATLINGTON HGV WEIGHT LIMIT ENFORCEMENT

Most of the comments (25) were in support of the strategies' proposal to increase enforcement of the HGV weight limit in Watlington.

Comment type	Frequency
Support for increased enforcement	25
ANPR cameras needed	10
Bban HGV's	6
Bypass needed	6
Do the same in Henley	5
Introduce vehicle width restriction	5
Reduce weight limit	3
Reduce WRZ	3

Increased enforcement required

Here are some of the comments in support of the proposal to better enforce the weight limit.

Enforcement needs to be more strictly enforced and publicised (145)

There seems to be no enforcement at all of the weight limit currently, so any improvement would be welcome, as very large vehicles often cause gridlock when unable to make turns, or have in the past damaged buildings! (196)

Enforcement of the weight limit used to be a regular thing, but seems to have been forgotten about (39)

This absolutely needs better enforcement. Originally enforced by Thames Valley Police, an over-extended OCC trading standards department does its best but things could be much better (205)

Without the enforcement of the 7.5 weight limit, any and all other traffic calming measures would be a waste of time and money (91)

Additional enforcement of the WRZ is a measure in our action plan and the low emission strategy. This is something that is in OCC's remit and we are working with them to try and explore and deliver on. OCC have stated that banning HGV's is not an option and would be detrimental to the economic viability of the area as well as simply moving the pollution problem elsewhere.

ANPR cameras needed

Ten people suggested that the use of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras would make enforcement of the weight limit more effective.

It would be worth investing in permanent vehicle number recognition systems to monitor the issue constantly (55)

ANPR to identify HGVs breaking the regulations and persuade the police to issue automatic fixed penalties as they already do with speeding offences (19)

Enforcement by ANPR and chicanes would help, especially at night and early morning when the rat-run to Reading is at its height (33)

Aggressive enforcement [is needed], possibly with an automated camera or some such device (43)

The potential introduction of ANPR cameras is also in our action plan and the low emission strategy.

HOW WE HAVE USED THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

The council would like to thank everyone who took part in this consultation it was a very encouraging turnout.

The consultation highlighted a high level of support for all of the proposed measures which was a very positive outcome. No new viable measures were proposed as part of the consultation, therefore no need was identified to alter the strategy as a result of the comments received. Many questions were raised which we have tried to answer in this report and encouragingly many of these were actions that already formed part of our adopted air quality action plan so it has been good to receive support for these.

Some concerns were raised over the measures to restrict vehicular access to the bridge in Wallingford and also the removal of on street parking in parts of Watlington. We understand that these are significant measures that would affect local residents, which is why they would first be trialled before being adopted. This approach enables us to gather detailed evidence of all the potential effects the measures could have before any decisions were made about whether to make them permanent or not.

In conclusion we are looking to get the low emission strategy fully adopted so we can progress with the measures and trials proposed within it.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the consultation or the results presented in this report, please contact:

Phillip Vincent

Corporate Consultation Officer

South Oxfordshire District Council

01235 422154

phillip.vincent@southandvale.gov.uk

To enquire about the councils work on air quality,

Claire Spendley

Environmental Health Officer

South Oxfordshire District Council

01235 540530

claire.spendley@southandvale.gov.uk

APPENDIX A – CONSULTATION WORDING



Listening Learning Leading

South Oxfordshire Low Emission Strategy 2016

South Oxfordshire District Council invites you to comment on a draft low emission strategy for the district which puts forward some ideas for improving air quality across the district and in settlements where this is a problem.

The consultation seeks your feedback on the ideas put forward in the draft strategy. It also provides an opportunity for you to suggest other things that could be done to reduce air pollution.

How to give your views

To make it easier for you to respond, we have summarised key parts of the plan in the survey itself.

Please send your completed surveys to:

Claire Spendley
Environmental Protection
South Oxfordshire District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Milton
OX14 4SB

The consultation runs from 1 February to 25 March 2016.

What happens next

We will consider all comments received and use these to finalise the strategy which we expect to publish towards the end of 2016 along with a summary of how we have responded to comments made in this consultation.

Further information

If you would like further information about this consultation, or have any questions please contact:

Claire Spendley
Environmental Health Officer
Claire.Spendley@southandvale.gov.uk
01235 540555

Introduction

Three towns in South Oxfordshire have air quality ‘hot spots’ where vehicle emissions could damage health.

We asked some air quality experts to look at this problem and they have written a draft “Low Emissions Strategy” that contains some ideas they say could reduce harmful vehicle emissions in these hot spots, and across the district as a whole.

The ideas they’ve suggested include training for bus and HGV drivers, making it more practical to use an electric car in South Oxfordshire, and asking bus companies to commit to using vehicles with cleaner engines. There are also some ideas that are specific to certain towns.

You’ll have a chance to comment on all of these individual ideas later in the survey.

Do you have any general comments or suggestions so far?

IDEA: Helping people reduce emissions from vehicles

This could include:

- campaigns to encourage people to switch off their engines at traffic queues in certain areas
- working with other organisations to provide, improve and encourage use of alternatives to their cars

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ no opinion

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this idea?

IDEA: Supporting the use of electronic and low emission vehicles

Electric vehicles are becoming more accessible and affordable. We can help to encourage residents and local businesses to use them by improving the public charging network. We could also work with businesses we're already in contact with e.g. taxi firms, to encourage them to use electric and low emission vehicles.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ no opinion

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this idea?

IDEA: Reducing pollution from HGVs and vans

This could include:

- HGV eco-driving campaigns.
- Delivery and service plans, and construction logistics plans, which help reduce freight deliveries to specific sites and organisations.
- Freight journey planning – working with the county council to make sure areas with poor air quality are fed into freight vehicles’ satnavs so routes are automatically planned to avoid these areas.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ no opinion

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this idea?

IDEA: Reducing bus emissions

This would involve working with the county council to encourage bus operators to commit to stricter European emissions standards, as well as supporting eco-driver training for bus drivers.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ no opinion

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this idea?

IDEA: Reducing the impact new developments have on air quality

We're currently creating our new Local Plan, which sets out where new housing should go, and what infrastructure should be put in place to support it. We want to make sure policies in the plan aim to reduce the impact new developments can have on traffic congestion and air quality. It's also possible for us to work with local communities creating their Neighbourhood Plans to make sure they consider air quality.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ no opinion

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this idea?

IDEA: Restrict access to the bridge over the Thames at Wallingford to some vehicles at certain times

We could investigate what options there are to limit the use of the bridge at certain times. This could significantly reduce the amount of traffic queuing at the lights on the High Street, which is a major source of the harmful vehicle emissions in the town centre.

If we decided to look into this option, we'd investigate in more detail to see how this could work, and we would consult more closely with local people so we can understand local issues better.

Are you a resident of Wallingford?

Yes

No

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/ no opinion

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this idea?

IDEA: Improving the flow of traffic through Watlington

One of the main problems in Watlington is vehicles struggling to travel past parked cars on the roads through the town, so they sit still, pumping out emissions – this is mainly caused by traffic parking on Couching and Shirburn Street.

Restricting parking on these roads could keep traffic moving and significantly reduce vehicle emissions.

Are you a resident of Watlington?

Yes

No

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/ no opinion

IDEA: More enforcement of the 7.5 tonne weight limit in Watlington

This wouldn't ban larger vehicles from the town as many of them are using the roads for legitimate reasons for local deliveries and access, but it might reduce the number of larger vehicles from using the town as a short cut.

Are you a resident of Watlington?

Yes

No

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/ no opinion

Thank you for your responses.

Would you like to be kept informed about other consultations being undertaken by Vale of White Horse District Council?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide us with some contact details below.

Your information will only be used for the purpose of contacting you in relation to council consultations.

Name

Email

Phone