



# MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL

FOUNDED IN 1480  
BY WILLIAM OF WAYNFLETE

Information redacted

Oxfordshire County Council

26<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Oxfordshire County Council

## **Magdalen College School's response to the LTN consultation**

Magdalen College School's vision for sustainable travel is that all pupils who can walk or cycle to school, can and should be able to do so safely. Those who cannot should take public transport or travel on the school bus service. We want parents and pupils to make these choices, knowing that pupils will arrive on site safe and happy. We aim to make this vision a reality within five years and therefore are supportive of the Council's efforts to reduce unnecessary car journeys in and around the City.

However, we are extremely concerned by the prospect of the East Oxford LTNs becoming permanent at the end of their trial period. The LTNs are causing serious disruption to the Oxford Schools' Bus Partnership which serves Magdalen College School and six other schools in the city. The observed effect of the LTNs has been to substantially increase congestion and journey times along the London Road / St Clements and Iffley Road, at the times the school buses arrive and leave, thus undermining the attractiveness of the service. Prior to the LTNs, our buses took on average 7-9 minutes to travel from Headington School to Magdalen College School. When the LTNs were introduced, the buses started taking 35 - 55 minutes to make the same journey. The situation was untenable; parents stopped letting their children travel on the buses and demanded refunds. The Directors of the OSBP were forced to re-route all the buses which normally started at Headington to ensure they no longer had to travel down Headington Hill. This exercise took four people three weeks of solid work, and resulted in sub-optimal re-routing for the buses. The situation led the schools involved in the OSBP to conclude that serving seven schools, on ten sites across the city, with twelve different routes, is not agile enough to meet the many challenges that lie ahead as LTNs, traffic filters and the ZEZ are introduced. Magdalen College School and Headington have therefore set up a new bus partnership to serve the two schools, which are located less than one mile apart. We are providing twelve core routes, as well as four late bus routes which will serve transport hubs outside the ring road.

Since the introduction of the LTNs, MCS has become reluctant to take pupils out of school by minibus or coach in the afternoon, as they cannot get back into school on time at the end of the day, owing to the heavy congestion into town on the Iffley Road. This was not the case pre-LTNs. This limits the amount of partnership work we are able to undertake in the community, and hampers our ability to run the Rose Hill community larder which we undertake every Tuesday. It also restricts the range and level of physical activity our pupils can undertake as we rely on transporting our pupils to sporting facilities on the outskirts of the city for a number of sports (e.g. the Astro at Oxford Hawks).

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Pupils and staff have become more concerned about how safe it is to cycle to school as congestion has increased on St Clement's, Iffley Road, Cowley Road and The Plain. There are no low traffic approaches to the school available to cyclists, as illustrated by the recently produced Cyclox map.

MCS has a number of staff who rely on driving into school owing to the lack of quick public transport from where they live. Many staff have seen their commuting time increase by 20-30 minutes owing to the additional congestion on the main roads. Teaching staff start work at 8am or earlier, and therefore additional commuting time is extremely unwelcome, and it has had a detrimental impact on their welfare. Parking at the park & ride car parks does not solve the problem as the buses take as long to get to the school as if the staff had remained in their cars. We are worried about the school's ability to recruit and retain staff; we have already seen people refuse job offers, and others leave only a few weeks after starting owing to the challenge of getting to the school site. We hear from our state partner schools in OX4 that this is a key concern for them, too.

The principal LTNs that have created this situation appear to be those on Divinity Rd and Howard St, as they close off key cross town routes and push traffic onto the radial roads; if these were temporarily removed until the traffic filter scheme is implemented we think it would significantly improve school bus journey times and make it more likely that the new partnership will attract an increased number of pupils.

We understand that the two measures were intended to complement each other, however the closure of the Botley Road means the traffic filters are delayed, and therefore we think the LTNs should be temporarily removed. We are seriously concerned that congestion will be so bad again next Autumn and Winter that the new bus partnership between MCS and Headington will fail. The bus service has been established at significant effort and cost, and will transport up to 600 pupils into and out of the city every day, thus removing the need for their parents to drive.

Yours sincerely

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