

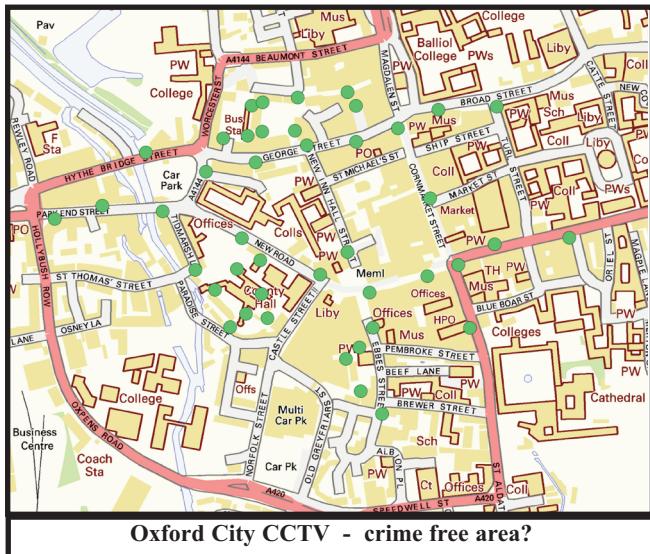


NO CCTV

www.no-cctv.org.uk
NO CCTV ON THE COWLEY ROAD

Better community reduces crime, technology does not

Winter Newsletter 2008



COWLEY ROAD CCTV UPDATE

Oxford City Council is set to plough ahead with CCTV on the Cowley Road despite opposition. The decision to install or not install cameras has taken away from the East Area Parliament (EAP) and appears to have been made by the City Council behind closed doors, away from public scrutiny and debate. The City Council is effectively saying you can have democracy as long as you do what we want.

No CCTV's campaign against the state surveillance cameras along the Cowley Road began in September 2007. The scheme then proposed was one prepared by Optimum Security in November 2006 – 10 cameras the length of the road that would allow people to be tracked all the way along. When No CCTV and local residents lobbied local councillors a scaled down plan of four wireless cameras for a one year trial was proposed. Local councillors agreed this in principle only at a meeting of the Oxford Safety Group on 29th October at Oxford town Hall. The final decision needed to be ratified at the EAP.

On 21st November 2007 No CCTV presented an in-depth report on the Cowley Road proposals, laying out the civil liberties implications, the ineffectiveness of CCTV in preventing crime/assisting with post crime clear up, the worrying future plans for CCTV as laid out in the National CCTV Strategy and the problems of a one year trial. The councillors did not ratify the decision.

On 23rd April 2008 the matter came before the EAP again and once again No CCTV were on hand to present the case against surveillance cameras, backed up by yet more evidence from two parliamentary inquiries into state surveillance in the UK. With crime figures showing crime falling in the Cowley Road area councillors were alerted to the fact that had CCTV already been installed Police would have used the falling crime figures to say CCTV works. No CCTV pointed out that any trial must be independently conducted using accurate before and after data and using a control area to account for issues such as the general trend of falling crime.

The EAP therefore resolved that the scheme could not progress without detailed crime data and without the right to terminate

FEAR OF CRIME AND CCTV

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has published a report entitled "Why are fear and distrust spiralling in twenty-first century Britain?" that explores the issue of why the fear of crime is so much higher than actual crime.

The report argues that the cause of growing fear and distrust is visible physical inequality and segregation in the environment, combined with a commercially driven media with a vested interest in promoting fear.

On CCTV the report points out: "mounting evidence shows that private security and CCTV does not reduce fear of crime or actual crime and might in fact increase crime. According to a study funded by the Scottish Office in Glasgow, there was no improvement in feelings of safety after CCTV was introduced, while the area studied actually showed an increase in crime. The author concluded that the 'electronic eye on the street' threatens to erode the 'natural surveillance' of 'mutual policing' by individuals and represents a retreat from 'collective and individual responsibility to self interest and a culture of fear."

the scheme after a year – therefore once again the decision was not ratified.

Then in November 2008 the Oxford Mail ran a story about traders on the Cowley Road "crying out" for CCTV and quoted Superintendent O'Dowda of Oxford Police who said that the scheme was going ahead just as soon as a few technical problems had been ironed out.

Some time between April and November the decision making powers with regards to CCTV were taken away from the EAP but where did they go? And who can we express our concern to now? Where's the democratic process?

No CCTV urges Oxford residents to write to their councillors as well as Councillor Sajjad Malik who holds the "Safer Communities" portfolio asking why large sums of public money are being poured into a technology proven to be ineffective other than in eroding the privacy of law abiding citizens and encouraging an environment of distrust. The Council should be required to prove unequivocally their claims about state surveillance before they are permitted to spend any public money in this way. To date they have not provided a shred of substantive evidence supporting their claims.



"Call it excessive if you like, but none of our guests have ever pinched anything."