

## General Studies Assignment: Should The Nottingham Tram Be Run Through Wilford?

In my assignment, I will be looking at the tram system that is in the middle of being built in and around Nottingham. I will study both sides of the arguments, with facts and opinions that I have gained from my source material. I have chosen this subject because it is a current issue in Nottingham, and also I live in Wilford. This is the area where most of the protests against the tram system are based, so I have a lot of experience about the arguments and reasons behind them.

Trams have been proven to work in big cities such as Leeds already, where the tram is an integral part of their infrastructure. Many views raised on their website have also been raised in Nottingham, but the tram in Leeds proves that trams can and do work.

The NET are the company making and running the tram, and their website puts forward 6 main reasons why a tram would benefit Nottingham:

- Large capacity and fast speed
- Flexibility and reliability
- Environment-friendly
- Comfortable, accessible and easy to use
- Safe
- It will greater enhance Nottingham's positive image

There is no doubt that the trams will be fast. They can reach a top speed of 50 mph, but will travel mostly at 30 mph due to the speed limit. Buses can do this, but the main advantage that trams have is that the journey is direct, as they don't have any traffic in the way. Also depending on the carriage size, the trams will be able to hold up to 200 people, significantly more than buses.

It is hard to judge whether the trams will be reliable and flexible, as that can only be decided when they are up and running. The one idea you can gain of reliability is that they won't get stuck in traffic, due to their own routes and road space. This can also gain flexibility, but as they are set to tracks, they can't be as flexible as buses are. One of the trams main advantages are that they environmentally friendly. They run on electricity from overhead cables, so do not pollute the environment like cars and buses do.

Trams will be very much like the buses at the moment. They will be comfortable, as the ride on rails will be smooth and easy to use, as their layout will familiar to that of busses. Yet again, they will be accessible as they are on rails, so have their own road space. When I visited the scale model of cabin in Nottingham city centre, they appeared spacious inside and low, so wheelchairs and pushchairs have access.

The tram will be safe, as it will keep within the set speed limits. Also, it will have the road to itself, so will not have the problem of cars being in the way. The problem is that is not very loud, so may be difficult to hear, and as it is on tracks, it has no ability to swerve out the way of a potential accident.

The tram will do a lot for Nottingham's image and infrastructure. It will make Nottingham one of only a handful of cities in Europe to have a tram; so will be seen to be on the edge of technology. It will also lead to better transport links, benefiting both businesses and public. It will also help ease congestion in the city, as more people will use the tram instead of driving.

I believe that most of this information is correct, even though it does come from the NET website. I think that some of it may have been embellished slightly, but the core of the arguments is sound. The problem I see in their argument is that they don't even mention downsides, let alone try and justify them.

Although these reasons do make a very strong case for having a tram, there are people opposed to it. My local area of Wilford has been proposed to have a tram run through it, and many residents aren't happy about it. They have formed a group, named ENT (Environment Not Trams), and their website states that the tram will:

- Destroy the disused railway embankment, endangering many wildlife
- Add a number of unsightly power lines, which require many substations.
- Increase the number of non-resident parking, leading to vandalism and crime.
- Significantly lower house prices in the area.
- Not enough people in Wilford will use the tram

I agree with the first point that the tram will ruin the embankment, as this is where the tram is to be run along. There will be no way of conserving the embankment, and I am certain that it will lead to many animals losing their habitat.

The argument that the power lines will be unsightly and an eyesore cannot be decided until the tram is built. I say this as along the embankment, there is much built up shrubbery, which would be enough to hide the proposed 5.8 metre cables. There is chance though that these could be cut down, and therefore show the cables.

It is probable that there will be an increased number of non-resident parking in the area, but I do not believe that this will lead to increased vandalism or crime. I think this because Wilford will be more used as a through route to town, with not many people getting off in Wilford, therefore not really leading to excess crime.

There is a chance that house prices could be lowered, but this also works in the other direction as well. People may not want to live next to a tramline, with trams passing every ten minutes disturbing them. This would lower the prices of the houses. The other side is that people may want to live next to trams, as it offers a quick and easy way to access Nottingham just outside their houses. This would raise the prices of the houses.

Their main argument of all against the tram though is that not enough people will use it (ENT January/February newsletter). They use the argument that the local number 9 bus only has a maximum of 5 people on it at any one time. This equates to 150 people per day, but NET is expecting 1600 people to use it. This is the main influence behind their opposition to the tram. The problem with the argument is that it only takes into account the number using the number 9 bus. This only runs through Compton Acres, and then on up into West Bridgford. Many more commuters and

public use the numerous Wilford Lane bus stops, where the buses then lead on into town. Well in excess of 1600 people.

Another arising problem I found came from the Wilwell Farm Cutting Nature Reserve, which is an area of specific scientific interest. The Wilwell Farm Cutting Nature Reserve will be worried by the tram being built, as they are right next to the proposed route, therefore will have to deal with all the building work going on next to it, and the destruction of the embankment. In my opinion though, it is of a significant distance away so that it will not be severely affected.

From this range of material that I have gathered, I conclude that the tram should be built in Wilford, as in my opinion, it will open the village up to the city in a greater way, and allow for ease of access. Although the arguments pressed by the ENT are valid, they fail to recognise the bigger picture. The tram is bound to destroy wildlife, as is any building work, but the embankment is not enough of a concern. It is both run down and mainly disused by residents, which has led to over growing and a basic eye sore. The tram shall mean that the embankment once again has a use, and will help the vast majority of residents get to work without a car, actually benefiting the environment. Their main basis of argument that people will not use it is, in my opinion, completely flawed. This is because it only takes into account one bus route, and ignores the many popular bus routes, which go into town like the tram will. I believe the only reason why people are complaining is because it is near where they live, so don't want building work there. If it were situated in a different village, they wouldn't campaign, as they are only looking for excuses for them not to have it outside their house.

Although the trams do have their drawbacks, any large-scale project in a big city such as Nottingham will have. When finished, the tram will be a centrepiece of Nottingham's infrastructure, and in my opinion, greatly outweigh any current concerns with its benefits.