

Planning

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Ref: P23/S1564/CM

Dear Emily

Re: R3.0138/21 Notice of Submission of Further Information

Proposal:

- The dualling of the A4130 carriageway (A4130 Widening) from the Milton Gate Junction eastwards, including the construction of three roundabouts;
- A road bridge over the Great Western Mainline (Didcot Science Bridge) and realignment of the A4130 north east of the proposed road bridge including the relocation of a lagoon;
- Construction of a new road between Didcot and Culham (Didcot to Culham River Crossing) including the construction of three roundabouts, a road bridge over the Appleford railway sidings and road bridge over the River Thames;
- Construction of a new road between the B4015 and A415 (Clifton Hampden bypass), including the provision of one roundabout and associated junctions;
- Controlled crossings, footways and cycleways, landscaping, lighting, noise barriers and sustainable drainage systems.

Location: A linear site comprising a corridor between the A34 Milton Interchange and the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden including part of the A4130 east of the A34 Milton Interchange, land between Didcot and the former Didcot A Power Station and the Great Western Mainline, land to the north of Didcot where it crosses a private railway sidings and the River Thames to the west of Appleford-on-Thames before joining the A415 west of Culham Station, land to the south of Culham Science Centre through to a connection with the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden.

Thank you for consulting South Oxfordshire District Council on the amendments to the above planning application.

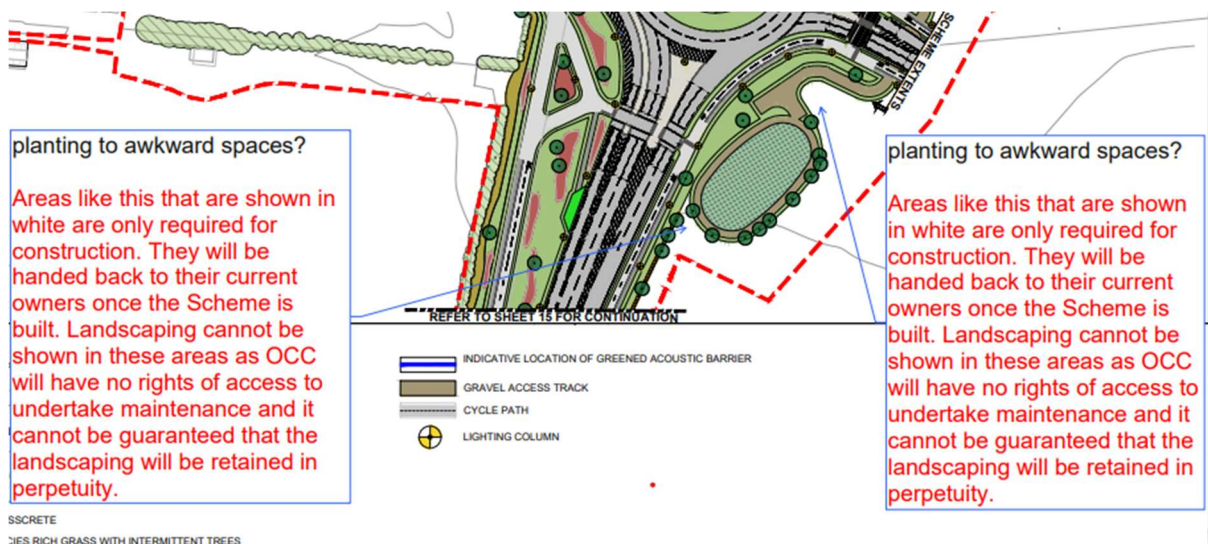
As per previous public statements South Oxfordshire District Council supports this project. South Oxfordshire District Council continues to support the principle of the proposals as the infrastructure will assist in delivering the housing and employment growth identified in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. Without this proposed infrastructure planned new growth is unlikely to be delivered and therefore the council has no objection in principle to the proposal.

The following planning matters should be assessed ahead of any permission given. Previous comments provided by this council in its response dated 23 December 2022 remain applicable and further observations on the amendments are set out in the table below:

Landscape Officer

The extent of planting mitigation proposed remains inadequate, as noted in previous comments. There has been very little increase in planting compared to the previous proposals, limited to a hedge and a limited number of individual trees. Other than a commitment to agree the colour of acoustic barriers, these seem to be the only changes made, leaving most previous comments unaddressed. It is very disappointing that no significant changes have been made at the Culham Science Centre entrance which remains a major concern.

The response to landscape comments contained in Appendix C shows a lack of willingness to include even otherwise unusable areas of land for planting to help with mitigation. As shown on the extract from the application documents below, these awkward spaces will be of no use to the landowner, but to use them for additional planting would be beneficial in helping to screen the road and better integrate the scheme into the landscape.



This approach to landscape mitigation is reflected throughout much of the scheme, resulting in a scheme where the extent of mitigation appears to have been largely limited to within the engineering land take, rather than defined by an assessment of landscape and visual mitigation requirements.

The landscape plans still do not include sufficient information to enable a proper understanding of the scheme, such as embankments and cuttings, and vegetation removed.

Forestry Officer

These comments are in relation to the amendments made to the application and should be read in addition to previous comments.

A Revised Arboricultural Impact Assessment Addendum dated April 2023 has been submitted. This report sets out the changes to the proposal and how the revisions impact on trees.

The revised changes to the scheme allow for the retention of more trees than the previous proposals, as it set out at section 3.2, which is welcomed. As shown this includes the retention of all trees subject to a TPO and in the Conservation Area, that were previously effected. The revised plans now also ensure no works are proposed within the root protection area of T424 a veteran tree.

The report still identifies that the proposal will require a very significant amount of tree removal and will reduce canopy cover significantly. It is therefore essential that new planting is maximised as part of the scheme.

The preliminary landscape masterplans submitted still do not show the level of detail required to be able to scrutinise the mitigation planting in detail. Considering the extensive tree removal proposed for this application, very considerable amounts of tree planting will be required. This is essential to ensure that the scheme delivers a net increase in canopy cover to address environmental issues such as climate change and carbon sequestration, as well as the landscape and amenity benefits required to be achieved for this project.

If planning permission is to be granted, then conditions will be required to secure tree protection measures (Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plans) in accordance with BS 5837:2012 and conditions to secure planting and its long term management, to ensure that the planting becomes successfully established to help mitigate the tree removal.

Conservation Officer

The revised detailing, specifically with regard to lighting and proposed planting and landscaping schemes, has been enhanced based on an understanding of the surrounding context - with regard to heritage assets.

The updated Heritage Chapter of the Environmental Statement and the proposed lighting plans show that in association with heritage assets there will be increased lighting in the wider area but when considered in the context of existing lighting near to heritage receptors this will not cause a significant harmful impact.

The replacement and new planting schemes have been further detailed on the proposed plans.

I suggest that a suitably worded condition is used in the grant of any permission to agree final details of proposed planting to ensure it can perform the required level of mitigation needed. This should include the proposed final detailing for the appearance of acoustic noise barriers.

Overall, there is likely to be some minor detrimental impact to the significance of heritage assets as a result of large infrastructure development in their wider setting. This is considered to be to the setting of the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area but will be a minor impact to the northern side of the designated area and is likely to be mitigated by enhanced landscaping and acoustic mitigation.

The impacts to Fullamoor Farmhouse are now better understood and the lighting strategy and planting proposals reflect this. Upon completion there will be a reduction in vehicular impacts as the main road is moved further away from the building and although lighting in the area will increase, this is set further from the building than existing street lighting.

I consider that the detail submitted is suitable to understand the likely impacts of the proposed infrastructure works. It is recommended that if you are minded to approve the plans, suitable conditions should be applied to agree the final details of planting and acoustic barriers where these serve to mitigate impacts on heritage assets.

Conclusion

I consider that there would be less-than-substantial harm to the significance of Fullamoor Farmhouse and the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area during the construction phases, at the lower end as this is still some distance away from any direct impacts and in the context of existing road infrastructure. I believe on completion this harm is likely to have significantly reduced to no harm as the infrastructure would take vehicles and lighting further away from the heritage assets than existing providing a moderate benefit as long as the acoustic and landscape mitigation proposed can be achieved.

Environmental Protection Officer (noise and vibration)

The acoustic report submitted in support of the application identifies that there are a number of properties that will experience a significant loss of amenity and for which there is no further cost-effective mitigation available. This negative impact ought to be balanced with positive impacts on noise exposure that the proposed scheme will provide at other locations.

I therefore offer no objection to the scheme but recommend that a condition be applied requiring that a Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan be submitted and approved in writing prior to the commencement of the development. Such a plan may form part of a wider Construction Environmental Management Plan.

I hope the above comments will assist in your determination of the application and if you require any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Bowerman
Principal Major Applications Officer