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HIF 1 Corridor between the A34 Milton Interchange and the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden

Planning Application Response R3.0138/21
Addendum Biodiversity, Landscape and
Visual, Arboriculture.

Oxfordshire County Council

9 June 2023

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Client signoff

Client	Oxfordshire County Council
Project	HIF 1 Corridor between the A34 Milton Interchange and the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This is an addendum to the initial report prepared by Atkins “HIF 1 Corridor between the A34 Milton Interchange and the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden Planning Application Response R3.0138/21 Biodiversity, Landscape and Visual, Arboriculture, Climate Change and Agriculture and Soils issued on 15th February 2023”, hereafter referred to as the Previous Consultation Response Report.
- 1.2. Given the concerns raised within the Previous Consultation Response Report, within the Biodiversity, Landscape and Arboricultural topics; a round table discussion was held on 21st March 2023 with relevant Aecom, Atkins and OCC specialists.
- 1.3. This report provides a summary of the response for Planning Committee following the comments and amendments that have been received from the Applicant for the planning application, R3.0138/21 as a result of the round table discussion.
- 1.4. This report has been updated to include the biodiversity response that was omitted in the version previously issued on 23052023 that provided the response for Landscape and Visual, and Arboriculture.

2. Summary of Response

- 2.1. A summary of the response has been provided below.

Biodiversity

- 2.2. The previous consultation response provided by the applicant addressed the majority of the issues raised, with the exception of those issues relating to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), and specifically the following as requested by OCC in the Regulation 25 letter (March 2023):

‘The BNG Assessment must be revised to update the baseline of the Finger Lakes restoration area to ‘good’ condition and to consider the impact of shading from the proposed viaduct; Additionally, further information is required to demonstrate how a 10% BNG of river units would be achieved. All on-site opportunities should be considered in the first instance (including those watercourses referred to by the Environment Agency). Where off-site provision is required in order to achieve a 10% net gain, information must be provided to demonstrate deliverability (e.g. through confirmation from an off-setting provider that the units can and will be delivered)’.
- 2.3. An updated BNG report, including the metric spreadsheets, was subsequently provided by the applicant for review in May 2023. The updated assessment in the BNG report submitted in May 2023 took full account of the losses and subsequent potential issues of post construction shading at the Hanson Restoration Area. The updated assessment included the changes and clarifications requested, which result in a slight increase of terrestrial habitats from a 23.13% net gain to a 23.25% net gain with hedgerows units and rivers units remaining unchanged at + 40.90% and +1.26% net gain respectively. It is concluded that the concerns have been addressed and the BNG assessment is now deliverable.
- 2.4. In respect of a 10% net gain in river units the updated BNG assessment submitted in May 2023 clearly shows that this is not possible within the site boundary. The updated BNG assessment clearly sets out what can be achieved within the site boundary and it is considered that all realistic opportunities have been considered. Therefore, to achieve an overall 10% net gain in river units offsite enhancements must be considered. The applicant has provided written confirmation from Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment detailing the costs required to provide an offsite 8.74% net gain in river units. Therefore, the applicant has demonstrated that with the implementation of offsite enhancements an overall 10% net gain in river units can be achieved.
- 2.5. On balance it can be confirmed that with appropriate conditions, the Scheme is now considered acceptable in terms of Biodiversity and complies with relevant planning policy. If the application is approved, the following conditions are recommended.



Conditions

- 2.6. The following conditions are recommended:
1. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (Biodiversity)
 2. Handover Environmental Management Plan (HEMP)
 3. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)
 4. Detailed Lighting Scheme
 5. Updated protected species surveys
 6. Detailed mitigation measures
 7. Protected species licencing
 8. Biodiversity Net Gain.

Landscape

- 2.7. The Previous Consultation Response Report stated that the LVIA presented a reasonable assessment of the potential effects of the scheme on landscape character and visual amenity. However, there were concerns regarding localised loss of vegetation and missed opportunities for more extensive replacement planting.
- 2.8. A mark-up of the Landscape Masterplan was issued to the Applicant noting areas to be reviewed to reduce the loss and maximise the retention of individual mature trees, groups of trees, and hedges and to provide more extensive replacement planting of trees and hedgerows across the scheme.
- 2.9. Most areas noted for review have been amended to include more hedgerow, trees or other vegetation as appropriate and no trees with TPO status are now affected.
- 2.10. It is now understood that in various other locations, amendments and additional planting is not possible due to:
- constraints of the topography,
 - constraints of underground utilities
 - extent of land owned by the Applicant within the Red Line Boundary,
 - much of land between the Scheme and the RLB is for construction working areas only and will be reinstated to its original condition and returned to the current landowner,
 - interfaces with adjacent proposed developments.
- 2.11. Accounting for the site constraints noted above, the amended masterplan presents a Scheme that is more integrated into the landscape and avoids areas of highest value. There are however areas that remain a concern or where it is considered more can be done. These areas are:
- Tie in at B4015: The Applicant states the tie-in here cannot be adjusted to avoid tree and hedge loss as it would not conform to DMRB standards. The new Landscape Masterplan does not show any replacement planting of hedgerow or the large trees that are required to be removed from either side of the B4015. **Replacement planting needs to be provided.**
 - Plans should make clear that all trees with TPOs should be retained and protected and, where additional vegetation beyond that already identified is removed during construction, it must be replaced with similar like for like habitat.
 - Hill Farm: better screening has been provided for this property, however, there still seems to be more being removed than necessary and none being replaced to the garden and side boundaries. This is possibly due to land being handed back to owner, but confirmation should be provided as to what state the land is being returned to the landowner.
 - Where space allows, consideration should be given to proposing low growing grass to central reserve areas.
 - Consideration should be given to the LEMP noting future management could allow development of natural regeneration of planting on the science bridge embankments
 - Further exploration of should be given to planting more hedges or trees closer to edges of swales eg as is proposed at the bat hop-over at Clifton Hampden.



- It is accepted that the mature, well-managed existing beech hedge at CSC entrance cannot be retained in situ but should be considered for translocation elsewhere on site.
- Consideration should be given to whether more hedgerows could be included, eg at attenuation ponds.

2.12. It is considered that the above could be addressed as part of the conditions.

2.13. On balance the Scheme is now considered acceptable in landscape and visual planning policy terms, subject to the following conditions set out below.

Conditions

2.14. The following conditions are recommended. Note that outline wording for each condition has been provided within the Previous Consultation Response Report, further recommended aspects are added below:

1. Detail Design for Bridges
2. Detail Design for Noise Barriers
3. Detailed Landscaping Scheme:
 - *Note that the hedgerow and trees to the B4016 tie in should either be retained or replaced. The detailed landscape scheme should also give consideration to planting hedges and trees to edges of swales, low growing grass to central reserves and translocation of the beech hedge at CSC.*
4. Protection of Retained Vegetation:
 - *All plans must make clear that no trees with TPO status are to be removed and must be protected for the duration of the works in accordance with the AIA and AMS. In addition, plans should note that, where vegetation beyond that already identified is removed during construction, it must be replaced with similar like for like habitat.*
5. Implementation of Approved Landscaping Scheme
6. External Lighting
7. Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan (LEMP):
 - *The LEMP should also include consideration of future management to allow natural regeneration of trees and shrubs on the science bridge embankments*
8. CEMP (Construction Environment Management Plan) (Landscape)
9. Handover Environmental Management Plan (HEMP).

Arboriculture

- 2.15. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) report and supporting plans prepared by the applicant have been developed in line with *British Standard 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition, and construction – Recommendations* (BS5837) BS and are considered suitable to support the planning application.
- 2.16. Trees are a material consideration in planning decisions and associated planning policies seek for the retention of higher quality trees.
- 2.17. The extent of tree removals is detailed within the summary tables provided in section 5 of the AIA and further tables submitted as part of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment Addendum.
- 2.18. The scheme design will result in the loss of individual trees and tree groups across a total combined area of 12.13 ha as provided in the updated AIA Addendum. The updated Addendum notes this is approximately 600m² less than the original assessment. *The figure previously provided as part of the Regulation 25 responses in November 2022 was 12.04 ha although this figure is believed to be a mistake and the updated AIA Addendum states the original assessment was 12.19 ha.*
- 2.19. The vast majority of removals are moderate quality (BS Category B) or low quality (BS Category C), with a single high quality (BS Category A) individual tree identified for removal.
- 2.20. Hedgerow removals are quantified at 5.67km, with replacement hedge planting totalling 3.84km.



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- 2.21. Further trees losses may result once tree positions and their associate Root Protection Areas (RPA) are confirmed on site. Additional unknowns include third party ownership, trees identified for removal outside the redline boundary, the impact of part removal on remaining tree groups, and the cumulative impact of ash die back.
- 2.22. The Applicant has sought to limit the impacts on high amenity value trees (Cat A) with only one such tree identified for removal (this being tree T534 which has been identified for further survey to confirm its position by the Applicant). This complies with local planning policies through the retention and protection of high amenity value trees.
- 2.23. One veteran tree (T424) lies within the scheme boundary. The drainage design has been adjusted and now illustrated on Tree Protection Plan (TPP) sheet 54 rev P03 as being outside of the root protection area/buffer zone of the tree. These works now comply with National and Local Planning Policies, and in line with the Standing Advice from Natural England.
- 2.24. The impacts on TPOs and Conservation Area trees has been mitigated through further design and none have been identified for removal as part of the proposed works.
- 2.25. Clifton Hampden Conservation Area (CA): proposed works now being limited to re-surfacing operations and trees within CA now to be retained, updated TPP sheet 58 rev P03 illustrates a construction working area hatch where tree crowns extend into works area, but no removals.
- 2.26. Culham Railway Station TPO 137/2009: Updated TPP sheet 48 rev P03 illustrates changes to proposed works to enable the retention of the TPO trees reference numbers T237, G262, T352, G355, G318 & G327 within the AIA.
- 2.27. T237 – no proposals now within RPA. Revised general arrangement has been delivered to accommodate changes.
- 2.28. G262 – cellular confinement system is now proposed to construct new hard surface turning head within extents of TPO group. However, there is an existing gap in vegetation in this area that is not represented by the polygon shape of the TPO. The proposals will now make use of this gap and therefore no removals of G262 are assumed.
- 2.29. T352 & G355 – design amendments made to swale, therefore, no RPA encroachments.
- 2.30. G318 & G327 – are to be retained. They have a construction working area hatch where tree crowns extend into works area. No removals proposed.
- 2.31. It is acknowledged that the constraints of the redline boundary limit the area available for replacement planting and therefore all opportunities to retain existing vegetation and maximise new planting should be taken as part of design development. The introduction of species other than ash will be seen as a benefit for the locality given the presence of ash dieback.
- 2.32. The Applicant refers to enhancement works as part of their BNG calculations. This enhancement of existing retained groups of trees would be seen as beneficial, however, details of these works would need to be confirmed and agreed with the LPA prior to the commencement of the works.
- 2.33. On balance the Scheme is now acceptable in terms of Arboriculture and complies with relevant planning policy. It is recommended that the Scheme should be Approved with the following conditions set out below.

Conditions

- 2.34. The following conditions have already been identified within the Previous Consultation Response Report that should be imposed should the scheme be given planning permission:
 - 1. Tree Survey
 - 2. Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS)
 - 3. Clerk of Works Supervision
 - 4. Tree Risk Management Strategy
 - 5. Consultation
 - 6. CAVAT analysis
 - 7. Construction Environmental Management Plan (Arboriculture).
- 2.35. The following additional conditions are recommended to also be included:



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- 2.36. **Condition:** T424 to be specifically referenced within an Arboricultural Method Statement with a clear auditable trail of mitigation measures to ensure the protection of the tree. This is to include pre-works, during works and post works operations.
- 2.37. **Condition:** G454 to be specifically referenced within an Arboricultural Method Statement with a clear auditable trail of mitigation measures to ensure the protection of this tree group. This is to include pre-works, during works and post works operations. Should trees require removal from this group then these shall be subjected to a CAVAT analysis in line with Policy TP8 of the OCC Tree Policy 2019.
- 2.38. **Condition:** Trees subject to TPO 137/2009 to be specifically referenced within an Arboricultural Method Statement with a clear auditable trail of mitigation measures to ensure the protection of the trees that fall within TPO extents. This is to include pre-works, during works and post works operations. Should any of the trees subject to TPO 137/2009 require removal or sustain significant damage then these shall be subjected to a CAVAT analysis in line with Policy TP8 of the OCC Tree Policy 2019.

