

<b>PINS Ref</b>	APP/U3100/V/23/3326625
<b>Site</b>	Land between A34 Milton Interchange, and B4015 north of Clifton Hampden, Oxfordshire
<b>Appellant</b>	Oxfordshire County Council
<b>Local Planning Authority</b>	Oxfordshire County Council

**Technical note pursuant to the Inspector's Pre-Inquiry Meeting Summary Note – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 (PIMS Note)**

1. Paragraphs 19 to 20 of the PIMS Note states as follows:

**Called in planning application - other matters**

19. The Local Planning Authority's (LPA) Statement of Case refers to them having various points of remaining concerns. This is in relation to the impacts of the development on the local community and the environment. However, they are relying on the Inspector to make a judgement. This is not sufficient or helpful.

20. Consequently, the LPA is required to provide a Technical Note setting out exactly what their concerns are. This is in specific relation to 'reasons 3 and 8'. This is because the LPA remains concerned about:

- the extent of traffic modelling undertaken by the applicant, and
- how the applicant has approached the traffic modelling for a new road scheme, which they consider are contrary to the policies of the LTCP.

2. At its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the County Council's Planning and Regulation Committee resolved as follows with regard to Reasons 3 and 8 given for the refusal of the application at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023:

**Reason 3 – The impact of traffic on Abingdon and Didcot had not been assessed in the application.**

**RESOLVED:** that overall, it was advised that the local planning authority in its Statement of Case did not oppose the application on this point but instead to set out the committee's concerns with regard to the extent of traffic modelling undertaken by the applicant, ask that, in reaching their recommendation to the Secretary of State, the inspector only recommended approval if they were satisfied that the traffic modelling carried out had robustly examined the wider traffic impacts beyond the application area and that conditions for the provision of bus prioritisation as set out in the officers report were attached to any planning permission granted by the Secretary of State.

**Reason 8 – Conflict with policy of the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022-2050.**

**RESOLVED:** that whilst not directly opposing the application on this point, instead to set out the committee's concerns with regard to how the applicant had approached the traffic modelling for a new road scheme contrary to the policies of the LTCP and ask that, in reaching their recommendation to the Secretary of State, the inspector should only recommend approval to the application if they were satisfied that, having considered the evidence put forward, the traffic modelling for the proposed new road had adopted a 'Decide and Provide' approach or that, if it was concluded it had not or had done so inadequately, that this did not outweigh the strong support for the development provided in the development plan as a matter of principle and that it was necessary therefore to accept it if the spatial strategy was to be delivered and the aims of chapters 5 and 6 of the NPPF were to be met.

3. To provide the further clarification requested by the Inspector, the members of the Planning and Regulation Committee were concerned that the traffic modelling carried out in support of the planning application had not extended as far as it could have done in terms of the impacts on the wider geographical area considered, specifically:
  - i) that it had not modelled the impact of the traffic heading north along the proposed road where it would join the existing B4015 at its northern end and thence to the Golden Balls roundabout on the A4074; and
  - ii) had not included the impact on Abingdon town from traffic turning westwards on the A415 from the proposed Abingdon roundabout junction into Abingdon which is already subject to high levels of traffic and associated congestion, particularly at peak hours.
4. It was understood that the applicant's position is that traffic modelling to be carried out in association with other major developments identified in the two District Local Plans and in association with separate highway strategies and schemes related to these parts of the highway network will be the appropriate times in which to consider these impacts and that these will then take into account the infrastructure proposed in this application should planning permission to it be forthcoming.
5. Whilst it was understood that there has to be a decision made by the applicant over which the extent of the traffic modelling of the effects of any proposed development will become of limited value or relevance, it remained unclear to the members of the Planning and Regulation Committee how the traffic associated with the development proposed here would impact the existing road network and so other road users at the Golden Balls roundabout and in Abingdon in the absence of modelling having been provided as part of this application associated with these other developments, strategies and schemes in respect of these two specific locations. Ostensibly in respect of modelling, there was a concern that the full traffic impacts in the areas most likely affected by the proposal have not been fully assessed in the modelling work. Particular concerns were identified with Abingdon because it is a major settlement that is part of the local highway network that the HIF1 proposal would form part of in the future. Likewise with the Golden Balls roundabout,

which is an important part of the existing network connection that would receive traffic from the proposal coming from the south via the Clifton Hampden section heading towards the B4015. Without these two areas having been modelled, there remained a concern that the traffic impacts arising from traffic exiting the proposal to the north have not been fully explained by the applicant.

6. The committee was also concerned that the application had not demonstrated that a Decide and Provide approach to the traffic modelling had been taken as set out in the LTCP.
7. The LTCP states as follows with regard to the Predict and Provide approach to transport planning:

*The predict and provide approach to transport planning uses past or historical traffic and socio-economic trends to determine the future need for infrastructure. Traditionally, transport planning has used this approach to forecast the transport needs of the future. However, this approach largely replicates and reinforces the status quo. With the changes to transport that are arising due to digital connectivity, new transport modes, the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to achieve a net-zero transport system, there is an increasing risk that infrastructure is provided that does not meet or shape the transport needs of the future.*

8. It goes on state as follows with regard to the Decide and Provide approach to transport planning:

*The decide and provide approach to transport planning decides on the preferred future and then provides the means to work towards that which can accommodate uncertainty. This offers the opportunity for more positive transport planning and helps implement a transport user hierarchy by considering walking and cycling up-front.*

9. The LTCP goes on to state:

*Ensuring that Oxfordshire's transport network remains reliable and effective is key to supporting the local economy and everyday journeys. Some road capacity enhancements may be required to enable this. In accordance with our transport user hierarchy, road capacity schemes will only be considered after all other options, including opportunities for traffic reduction, have been explored. It is important that a 'decide and provide' approach is taken during the development of new schemes to ensure that they contribute towards delivery of our vision and do not reinforce traditional transport planning approaches.*

*What are the benefits for people in Oxfordshire?*

*Where appropriate, road capacity schemes will help to tackle congestion and pollution providing benefits to health and everyday journeys. It will also support the economy and ensure the county remains an attractive place to*

*work and live. Adopting a decide and provide approach to planning new infrastructure, including alongside proposed new development will mean that any road capacity enhancements align with our transport user hierarchy, prioritising the most space efficient modes of walking, cycling and public transport. This will help to create attractive environments for residents to walk and cycle in. The decide and provide approach will also help us to deliver infrastructure that caters for future transport needs.*

10. The application was submitted in November 2021, eight months prior to the council's adoption of the LTCP. Whilst the proposed scheme does provide for provision to be made for walking and cycling, this would be provided alongside what is intrinsically a major road. The expectation supporting the application is that the majority of users will continue to rely on motorised private vehicles going forward. It was only in September 2023 that the applicant first proposed that measures to provide priority to buses could be provided for by condition should planning permission be granted to the application.
11. The application has been based on traffic survey data undertaken in 2016 to 2017 to inform a model built in 2017 and updated in 2020 based on information with regard to the completion of developments permitted by the two District Councils. Whilst the applicant under questioning from members of the committee argued that despite this, the principles of a Decide and Provide approach had been taken into account, it remained unclear how a development that relies heavily on traffic modelling based on existing surveys and predicted traffic generation, can by definition then be adopting anything other than fundamentally the Predict and Provide approach set out above rather than the Decide and Provide approach.
12. The Local Planning Authority appointed a highway consultancy, Origin Transport Consultants Limited (Origin), to review these remaining concerns. As part of this review, Origin was able to consider the Technical Note provided by the applicant to the inspector as requested in paragraph 22 of the PIMS note; this note was of course not available to the members of the Planning and Regulation Committee at their meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Origin's Review and its conclusions are attached as Annex 1.
13. This Technical Note provides the requested further clarification as to the specific concerns from the Local Planning Authority in respect of proposed reasons for refusal 3 and 8. Whilst it is considered these concerns were well-founded based on the information available to the committee at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the Review undertaken by Origin concludes as follows:
  - i) The Golden Balls Roundabout was not included in the junction assessments in the TA as the overall flows at Golden Balls would remain the same but there would be a change in the direction of travel. It is not considered that the lack of impact assessment work on Golden Balls is an omission that requires attention as there is a separate mechanism and commitment from the Council to deal with impacts at the junction.

- ii) The impact of the HIF1 Scheme on Abingdon, has been assessed as part of the strategic modelling associated with the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Local Plan evidence base and further modelling for the HIF1 planning application was therefore not required. There are other projects and strategies that focus on future changes in and around Abingdon that deal with the impact arising from planned growth independently of HIF1 although the HIF1 Scheme is part of the same overall strategy.
- iii) The Decide and Provide approach has been taken into account with sustainable travel measures included as key components of the Scheme and this has been reflected in the method used for the junction impact assessment of the Scheme alongside trip reduction assumptions.
- iv) The HIF1 Scheme is an integral part of the LTCP policy. The Local Area Strategy update for South and Vale continues to reference progressing with the HIF1 Scheme which is deemed as necessary within the overall Carbon Net Zero policy approach.

## **Conclusion**

14. It is evident from the Origin review that the Committee had valid concerns in respect of the extent of transport modelling and whether the County Council's LTCP Decide and Provide policy had been applied. However, in view of the additional information now provided by the applicant in their own Technical Note requested by the Inspector, the Origin review also demonstrates that the remaining concerns in relation to reasons for refusal 3 and 8 have now been addressed. Officers agree with the conclusions reached by Origin who have been commissioned to provide an independent technical review of the matters. An update on this technical note and progress with the Inquiry generally will be given to the Committee members at the next held meeting of the Planning & Regulation Committee, and any response from that will be reported back to the Inspector.



**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (LPA)**  
**DIDCOT HIF1**

**Location:** Didcot

**Report:** Technical Note 1<sup>V1</sup>

***December 2023***

PROJECT DETAILS	
Site Location	Didcot
Project	Didcot HIF1
Report Title	Technical Note 1
Client	Oxfordshire County Council
Job Number	J10580

	Name	Position	Date
Prepared By	Sarah Halsey	Principal Consultant	20/12/2023
Checked By	Del Tester	Managing Director	21/12/2023
Authorised By	Del Tester	Managing Director	29/12/2023

Status	Revision	Description	Date
Final	V1	Issued	29/12/2023

© Origin Transport Consultants

No part of this document may be reproduced by any means whatsoever without the prior permission in writing of Origin Transport Consultants Limited. Origin Transport Consultants Limited disclaims any responsibility to the Client or any third party in respect to matters that are outside of the scope of this report. This report has been prepared with reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the contract with the Client and taking account of manpower, resources and testing devoted to it by agreement with the Client. This report is confidential to the Client and Origin Transport Consultants Limited accepts no responsibility of any nature to third parties to whom this report or any part thereof is made known. Any third party relies on the content of this report at their own risk.

**CONTENTS**

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....4

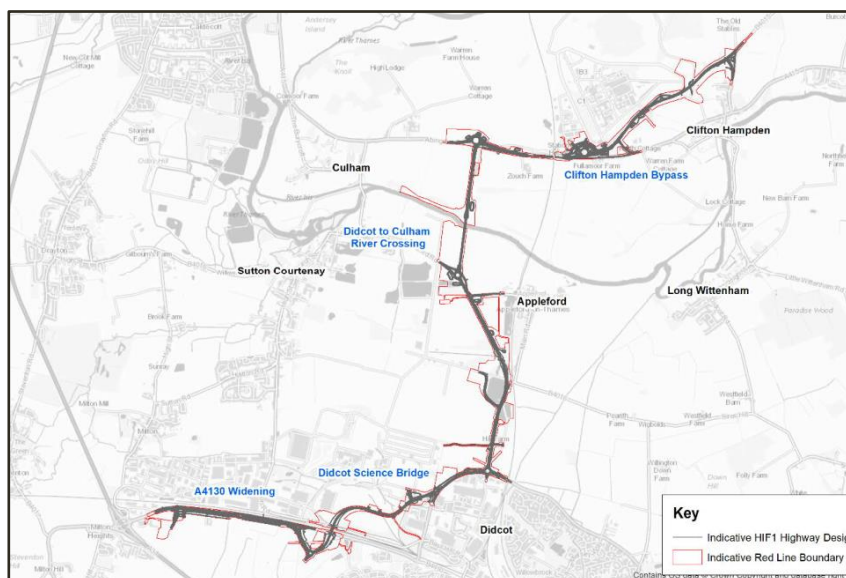
2.0 TRAFFIC IMPACT.....6

3.0 CONFLICT WITH OBJECTIVES IN THE LTCP..... 11

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ..... 14

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Origin Transport Consultants Limited has been commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council as Local Planning Authority to review transport issues raised by Planning and Regulation Committee during its consideration of the planning application for the HIF1 Didcot Garden Town Infrastructure project ('the HIF1 Scheme').
- 1.2 The Scheme includes 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); 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; and controlled crossings, footways and cycleways, landscaping, lighting, noise barriers and sustainable drainage systems. The proposed Scheme is shown in **Figure 1** below.



**Figure 1: Proposed Scheme**

- 1.3 A Transport Assessment (TA) was prepared by AECOM on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) in support of the application.

- 1.4 The application was presented to the Council's Planning & Regulation (P&R) Committee in July 2023 with a recommendation for approval. The Local Highway Authority (LHA) did not object to the application in transport terms having assessed in detail the traffic modelling and impacts arising on the road network and concluded that the proposal would enable significant benefits to the network to support the delivery of planned growth. However, the Planning & Regulation Committee resolved to refuse planning permission as they had concerns in 8 areas relating to the development's impact. Transport related reasons 3 and 8 are as follows;
- The impact of traffic on Abingdon and Didcot had not been assessed in the application;
  - Conflict with policy of the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022-2050 (LTCP).
- 1.5 Whilst preparing the formal Decision Notice, the Council received notification that the Secretary of State called in the application for determination and that the application will be considered following a formal Public Inquiry that is scheduled to commence on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024.
- 1.6 Some amendments to the Scheme have subsequently been undertaken by the applicant that seek to address some of the concerns raised by members at the July 2023 committee meeting. Following these amendments an update was reported back to Committee in September 2023 where Committee agreed to adopt a neutral position on the planning application rather than to oppose it.
- 1.7 Following a pre-Inquiry meeting the appointed Inspector has requested that the Council as Local Planning Authority (LPA) provide a Technical Note with further clarification on the specific concerns from the LPA in respect of proposed reasons for refusal 3 and 8.
- 1.8 Origin Transport Consultants have been asked by the LPA to provide an overview on the following points:
- whether there are any concerns with the transport impacts of the Scheme that should be submitted to the Planning Inquiry in regard to the traffic modelling undertaken;
  - whether the Scheme has adopted the OCC Decide and Provide approach, and
  - whether there is conflict with policy of the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

## 2.0 TRAFFIC IMPACT

- 2.1 Reason 3 for refusal stated that “*The impact of traffic on Abingdon and Didcot had not been assessed in the application.*”
- 2.2 With regards to the impact of traffic on Abingdon and Didcot, the members of the Planning and Regulation Committee were concerned that the traffic modelling carried out in support of the planning application had not extended as far as it could have done in terms of the impacts on the wider geographical area considered, specifically:
- that it had not modelled the impact of the traffic heading north along the proposed road where it would join the existing B4015 at its northern end and thence to the Golden Balls Roundabout on the A4074; and
  - had not included the impact on Abingdon town from traffic turning westwards on the A415 from the proposed Abingdon roundabout junction into Abingdon which is already subject to high levels of traffic and associated congestion, particularly at peak hours.

### Golden Balls Roundabout

- 2.3 The northern section of the Scheme, the Clifton Hampden Bypass, includes a road connecting the A415 in the west with the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden. The Golden Balls Roundabout is located directly north-west of this section of the Scheme. It connects the B4015 with the A4074 Oxford to Henley Road. As the junction has not been modelled in the TA, there are no Do Minimum flows, but nearby Scheme junction 14 is significantly over capacity in 2034.
- 2.4 The Golden Balls junction is included in the Paramics model so Do Minimum and Do Something scenarios could have been compared or modelled but no information is included in the TA on this junction.
- 2.5 However, AECOM has now produced a Technical Note, POETS Request for Regulation 25 Letter Rebuttal, dated 14th December 2023. Paragraph 2.27 of this TN explains that the Applicant considers that, due to the existing highway layout in this rural area near Golden Balls, the Scheme would not increase travel through the Golden Balls junction and was therefore not assessed in the TA. The Scheme could create a routing change on the roads leading to Golden

Balls, by persuading drivers to use the HIF1 Clifton Hampden Bypass and then approach Golden Balls from the southwest on the B4015 instead of from the southeast on the A4074 via the A415. The overall flows at Golden Balls would therefore remain the same but there would be a change in the direction of travel for traffic from the south west.

- 2.6 The AECOM TN POETS Request for Regulation 25 Letter Rebuttal also explains that work is ongoing to develop a future strategy for Golden Balls. The junction was identified in LTP4 as potentially requiring changes in the future, and through the Local Plan process it was included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan for multiple allocated development sites, requiring them to pay towards future changes.
- 2.7 The Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) which was adopted in 2022 includes a review of LTP4 in Appendix 1. SV2.18 and 2.19 explain that capacity improvements will be delivered at the Golden Balls roundabout which will take into account the impact of the HIF1 Scheme.

SV 2.18	Delivering capacity improvements at the Golden Balls Roundabout (junction of A4074 and B4015) to improve connectivity between Science Vale and the Eastern Arc of Oxford.	The optioneering exercise for the Golden Balls roundabout is due to be commissioned late summer/early autumn 2021 and will take approximately 12 months to complete.
SV 2.19	Delivering capacity improvements on the A4074 north of Golden Balls roundabout to improve connectivity between Science Vale and the Eastern Arc of Oxford.	The optioneering exercise for the Golden Balls roundabout is due to be commissioned late summer/early autumn 2021 and will take approximately 12 months to complete. The study will look at the need for bus priority measures north of the Golden Balls roundabout and consider the impacts of traffic growth along this corridor.

**Figure 2: From Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Annex 3**

- 2.8 Policy 53 of the LTCP states “We will produce transport corridor strategies that align with the LTCP vision and translate the LTCP policies into schemes for use in bidding, funding and developer contributions. Strategies will be developed for: e A4074.”
- 2.9 The AECOM TN explains that an A4074 Corridor Strategy is currently underway, looking into future options for the entire route, as per Policy 53 of LTCP. This takes into consideration all modes of transport and is also supported by an ongoing study investigating the feasibility of multiple options for walking and cycling routes between Oxford and Berinsfield, which would form part of the wider Strategic Active Travel Network (linking with HIF1).
- 2.10 In summary, the Golden Balls Roundabout was not included in the junction assessments in the TA as the overall flows at Golden Balls would remain the same but there would be a change in the direction of travel. Separate to the HIF1 Scheme, work is underway to develop capacity

improvements at Golden Balls as well as a review of the entire A4074 Corridor which will take into account the HIF1 Scheme. It is therefore not considered that the lack of impact assessment work on Golden Balls is an omission that requires attention as there is a separate mechanism and commitment from the Council to deal with impacts at the junction.

### **Impact on Abingdon**

- 2.11 The new HIF1 Scheme connects to the A415 approximately 1200m east of the Tollgate Lane / A415 junction. Members of the Planning and Regulation Committee were concerned that the traffic modelling had not included the impact on Abingdon town from traffic turning westwards on the A415.
- 2.12 An initial review of 2034 traffic flows at the Tollgate Lane / A415 junction shows significant increases in the eastbound Do Something flows compared to the Do Minimum flows.
- 2.13 The OCC July 2022 Highways Response states: *"In discussions with OCC Highways, Abingdon was not included within the modelling for this planning application, the justifications for which are expanded upon below.*

*Any increase in traffic flow into/out of Abingdon is due to the growth in housing and employment in Didcot and surrounding areas, not due to the HIF1 Scheme itself. The traffic impact on Abingdon from those housing and employment sites will be scrutinised by OCC Highways through the Transport Assessment in the planning application for each site. If mitigation is deemed necessary, which could include sustainable travel infrastructure and/or services, then OCC will secure funding or direct delivery for this from each housing/employment site. HIF1 is part of a wider strategy to mitigate the impact of growth across a wide area, which can only be delivered incrementally as funding becomes available, either through government grants or developer funding."*

- 2.14 The assumption that all of the impacts are associated with growth rather than infrastructure reassignment is not evidenced in the planning application submissions and additional information in this respect could be provided. At first glance, the lack of further information on the impacts on Abingdon does therefore appear to be a legitimate concern.

- 2.15 If the impacts are significant and associated with planned development growth, then it would be expected with such a significant infrastructure scheme that it would explain the level of intervention required from the planned developments to offset those impacts to ensure that appropriate mitigation strategy was deliverable in principle. This could of course include mode shift targets and the identification of necessary active and non-car infrastructure that can be delivered. This would then form part of a strategy for securing S106 obligations in due course.
- 2.16 However, the AECOM TN POETS Request for Regulation 25 Letter Rebuttal provides further explanation on how the wider impacts of the HIF1 Scheme in relation to wider growth in the area has been assessed.
- 2.17 The Oxfordshire Strategic Model (OSM) is a SATURN model that covers all of the county. It allows high-level assessments to be made across wide areas, taking account of allocated growth and transport mitigation strategies. Importantly it has been used to support the development and eventual adoption of the Local Plans that allocated the significant growth across the area, in particular:
- Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (2016);
  - Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (2019); and
  - South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (2020).
- 2.18 This strategic modelling which included the growth in both the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire, together with growth elsewhere in the County, informed the three Local Plans as examined and found to be sound by each individual Planning Inspector. These multiple modelling exercises take account of the planned growth and proposed mitigation, including the HIF1 Scheme and the assessment included Abingdon.
- 2.19 The strategic modelling identified a number of measures to deal with Local Plan growth and these are explained in the respective Local Plans and the more recent LTCP which includes in Appendix 1 an update on LTP4 schemes and sets out progress as of 2022. Abingdon schemes in the Science Vale Area Strategy include:
- SV1.3: Delivering south-facing slips on the A34 north of Abingdon (currently in the design phase) and investigating the provision of a new Park & Ride and bus priority

measures at Lodge Hill Interchange. The provision of a full movement interchange will improve capacity and accommodate additional traffic from potential future development. A new Park & Ride will enable more trips into Oxford to be made by bus and alleviate congestion on Oxford's approach roads.

- SV2.2: Securing new strategic bus services and associated infrastructure between major residential sites at Didcot, Wantage & Grove, Wallingford, Abingdon, town centres / retail and the employment sites at Milton Park, Harwell Campus, Culham Science Centre, and Oxford.
- SV2.3 Securing improvements to existing bus services and associated infrastructure between Oxford, Didcot, Wantage & Grove, Abingdon, Wallingford and employment sites in Science Vale.
- Science Vale Cycle Network, the LTCP explains that the updated strategy will look again at the area and be formally known as the Science Vale Active Travel Network (SVATN) phase 2 and be expanded to take account of the additional allocated growth in the area (within SODC's Local Plan). Route 3: Abingdon to Milton Park has been delivered, Route 4: Abingdon to Harwell and Route 7: Abingdon to Culham will be investigated as part of the SVATN stage 2 work.

- 2.20 It is noted that OCC is currently creating a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Abingdon alongside key stakeholders, which will identify the infrastructure improvements required in the town, which may include reprioritisation of road space.
- 2.21 It is therefore considered that the impact of the HIF1 Scheme on the wider area including Abingdon, has been assessed as part of the modelling associated with the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Local Plans and further modelling for the HIF1 planning application was therefore not required.
- 2.22 The applicant further explains in the TN that as the A415 is the only route into / out of Abingdon into the easterly direction, due to the historic highway layout created by the river Thames, means that the Scheme would not influence route choice into and out of Abingdon.

### **3.0 CONFLICT WITH OBJECTIVES IN THE LTCP**

- 3.1 The LTCP outlines a vision to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system that enables the county to thrive whilst protecting the environment. This would be achieved by reducing the need to travel, discouraging unnecessary individual private vehicle journeys and making walking, cycling, public and shared transport the natural first choice.

#### **Decide and Provide Approach**

- 3.2 At the heart of the LTCP is the Decide and Provide' approach rather than the traditional 'Predict and Provide' approach with regards to road capacity. The Decide and Provide approach to transport planning decides on the preferred future and then provides the means to work towards that which can accommodate uncertainty. This offers the opportunity for more positive transport planning and helps implement a transport user hierarchy by considering walking and cycling up-front.
- 3.3 The LPA's Planning & Regulation Committee were concerned that the application had not demonstrated that a Decide and Provide approach to the traffic modelling had been taken as set out in the LTCP. The committee were concerned that, whilst the proposed Scheme does make provision for walking and cycling, this would be provided alongside what is intrinsically a major road. The expectation supporting the application appeared to be that the majority of users will continue to rely on motorised private vehicles going forward.
- 3.4 Members were also concerned that it remained unclear how a development that relies heavily on traffic modelling based on existing surveys and predicted traffic generation can by definition then be adopting anything other than fundamentally the Predict and Provide approach rather than the Decide and Provide approach.
- 3.5 It should be noted that the main purpose of HIF1 is to support the delivery of housing growth in the wider Didcot Garden Town area and to mitigate the impact of existing, approved and allocated developments. It is not an infrastructure scheme to resolve existing congestion issues in the area but was deemed necessary to allow growth to be accommodated.

- 3.6 The AECOM TN POETS Request for Regulation 25 Letter Rebuttal explains that Cycling/walking facilities are key Scheme objectives and thus fundamental components of the Scheme. The Scheme delivers essential walking and cycling provisions required to help to form a cohesive active travel network in the area. The Scheme facilities would link with other projects such as the Milton Heights Active Travel Bridge, schemes in the Science Vale Active Travel Network, schemes in the Strategic Active Travel Network, and schemes in the Didcot LCWIP. Therefore, in delivering a significant piece of active mode infrastructure in this area, the Scheme is contributing to providing modal shift.
- 3.7 In addition, the bus services will benefit from the reductions of congestion in the Didcot area due to the Scheme, and therefore the Scheme helps to improve bus journey time reliability and therefore the attractiveness of services as well as maintaining commerciality.
- 3.8 The TA explains that in recognition of sustainable transport policies, a traffic reduction of 20% has been made in the 2034 Paramics base flows to allow for sustainable travel measures associated with planned growth which would be expected to comply with the LTCP carbon reduction policies (amongst others). The justification for 20% reduction approach was agreed by OCC for the following reasons:
- As the model uses a generic trip rate across all development in the area, a demand reduction was required to align the trip generation with trip rates that have been recently accepted by OCC for planning applications in Didcot (as shown in table 5.4 on the TA).
  - It is assumed that the Didcot Garden Town principles will continue to be enacted in this area over the next 14 years, increasing the usage of sustainable modes of travel. Modal shift from these developments later in the plan period (over a decade away) is more likely as they are coming alongside significantly improved pedestrian / cycle / public transport provisions.
  - The largest new development sites follow good spatial strategies and are in more sustainable locations near public transport hubs and / or are located nearer the growing employment areas which will have significantly improved NMU routes.
- 3.9 It is therefore considered that Decide and Provide has been taken into account with sustainable travel measures included as key components of the Scheme as well as trip reduction assumptions.

### **Potential conflict with policy of the Council's LTCP**

- 3.10 Origin were requested to review whether the HIF1 Scheme complies with LTCP policy.
- 3.11 LTCP Policy 52 discusses the development of local area strategies. Appendix 1 includes an update on schemes within those strategies and explains progress as of 2022. With regard to the HIF1 Scheme, the Local Area Strategy update for South and Vale continues to reference progressing with the HIF1 Scheme which is deemed as necessary within the overall Carbon Net Zero policy approach. It is therefore clear that the LTCP doesn't remove the need for the Scheme, it is in fact an integral part of the overall LTCP policy. It can therefore be concluded that there is no conflict and HIF1 is consistent with this policy as well as adopted policies in the respective Local Plans for SODC and VoWH.

## 4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Origin Transport Consultants Limited has been commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council to review the following issues raised by Planning and Regulation Committee on the HIF1 Didcot Garden Town Infrastructure project ('the HIF1 Scheme'):
- whether the traffic impacts of the Scheme on the Golden Balls Roundabout and on Abingdon should have been assessed;
  - whether the Scheme has adopted the OCC Decide and Provide approach, and
  - whether there is conflict with policy of the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.
- 4.2 The Golden Balls Roundabout was not included in the junction assessments in the TA as the overall flows at Golden Balls would remain the same but there would be a change in the direction of travel. It is not considered that the lack of impact assessment work on Golden Balls is an omission that requires attention as there is a separate mechanism and commitment from the Council to deal with impacts at the junction.
- 4.3 The impact of the HIF1 Scheme on Abingdon, has been assessed as part of the strategic modelling associated with the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Local Plan evidence base and further modelling for the HIF1 planning application was therefore not required. There are other projects and strategies that focus on future changes in and around Abingdon that deal with the impact arising from planned growth independently of HIF1 although the HIF1 Scheme is part of the same overall strategy.
- 4.4 The Decide and Provide approach has been taken into account with sustainable travel measures included as key components of the Scheme and this has been reflected in the method used for the junction impact assessment of the Scheme alongside trip reduction assumptions.
- 4.5 The HIF1 Scheme is an integral part of the LTCP policy. The Local Area Strategy update for South and Vale continues to reference progressing with the HIF1 Scheme which is deemed as necessary within the overall Carbon Net Zero policy approach.

YOUR PROJECT. YOUR JOURNEY. OUR PASSION



[WWW.ORIGIN-CONSULTANTS.COM](http://WWW.ORIGIN-CONSULTANTS.COM)

Tele: 0800 368 8911