

PINS Reference: APP/U3100/V/23/3326625

26th September 2023

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Case Officer
Planning Inspectorate
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Dear Sirs

R3.0138/21 “HIF1” Land between the A34 Milton Interchange and the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden: Recovered for Determination by the Secretary of State

1. Introductory Comments

We are aware that the Secretary of State has exercised his prerogative under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to direct the local planning authority to refer an application to himself for decision, in the case referenced above.

In line with the procedures set out in the relevant Regulations, this letter sets out of our representations on the planning application, for consideration by the Secretary of State’s appointed Inspector. We trust that the contents can be considered duly made and given due weight in the decision-taking process.

The Oxford Bus Group (OBG), comprises the bus operating subsidiaries of Go-Ahead Group operating in South Oxfordshire District and the Vale of White Horse District within which these proposals lie: City of Oxford Motor Services Ltd T/A Oxford Bus Company; and Thames Travel (Wallingford) Ltd.

We run the vast majority of the scheduled public bus mileage within both Local Authority Districts within which the proposals lie. Reflecting this, and in direct support of the ongoing delivery of large-scale plan-led growth, we have grown these operations substantially since 2019, defying the national trends, and the very serious challenges posed by the COVID-19 public health crisis and its aftermath.

This has led to substantial increases in the share of local journeys undertaken by bus in the Didcot, Milton Park and Harwell area. These notable and encouraging results have been achieved by ongoing collaboration and partnership between us and the County Council, as well as major local stakeholders at Milton Park and Harwell Campus, and the University of Oxford.

The majority of our operations in the area of the proposals are undertaken by our Thames Travel business from a modern facility at Didcot that adjoins the proposals, at Collett. In fact, a very small portion of our site is subject to Compulsory Purchase proceedings, but this is not material to our current or future operations on the site. We operate a fleet of 70 buses from the Didcot site, and have a full establishment of 160 staff at the depot. This makes us a substantial local employer, as well as an important transport infrastructure service provider in the sense set out in the National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 16c.

We wish to lodge our formal **support** for the proposals under consideration.

In the following sections we outline the strategic role of bus in supporting sustainable mobility across the so-called “Science Vale UK”, both now and into the future. “Science Vale UK” is a nationally and internationally significant cluster of institutions and businesses across the broad Thames Valley area south of Oxford City. Spatial proximity and effective connectivity is well recognised to be of the essence in underpinning the functional collaboration that is required to drive forward knowledge and innovation. Notable large-scale sites include Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Culham Science Centre, and Milton Park, as well as the Oxford Science Park and ARC Oxford on the southern fringes of the City of Oxford.

This role is recognised explicitly in the development strategy set out in the Statutory Adopted Development Plans for the area. A future substantially greater role for bus is now supported by the Government’s National Bus Strategy for England “Bus Back Better” (NBSE) published in April 2021, as well as in the recently adopted Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) adopted in Summer 2022. The Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is aimed at securing these objectives in the short-medium term. It will be shown that the proposals are both congruent with these policies, and, in fact, are crucial in securing the delivery of necessary public transport outcomes in the immediate vicinity of the proposals, as well as across the wider Science Vale.

We will set out briefly the challenges presented by current highways conditions to the delivery of attractive, reliable bus services, and set out how the delivery of the proposals is crucial to directly supporting the efficient and reliable operation of existing services. These are necessary to achieve broad national and local policy transport policy goals.

We will then set out equally important evidence as to how the proposals are unavoidably necessary to directly facilitate substantial improvements to both service levels, journey times and connectivity in future. These public transport

improvements, dependent on the proposals, represents substantial elements in the public transport strategy supporting the sustainable delivery of the Local Plan strategy for the area. We conclude that without the timely delivery of the proposals, the level and quality of bus service both current and in the future, would be placed in very serious peril.

We thus conclude that the proposals should be allowed by the Secretary of State, in line with the properly evidenced recommendation made to the Oxfordshire County Council Planning Committee in June 2023.

2. Description of the Scheme and its role related to bus service delivery.

The proposals involve four identifiable components that each perform a particular role in addressing issues in and around their immediate localities, but also create a single wider corridor from the A34 at Milton Interchange to the A4074 at Golden Balls, skirting the western portion of Didcot.

- A4130 dualling Milton Gate
- A4130 “Science Bridge”
- Didcot-Culham Link, including the new Thames Crossing
- A415/B4015 Clifton Hampden Bypass

The existing deficiencies in the highways network that the scheme is to address are laid out at section 2.2 of the Planning Statement and need no repetition. Committed development is certain to make the existing problems significantly worse, in the absence of the proposals.

These directly affect our services in a number of ways.

The chronic congestion and delay that arise have a particularly serious impact on bus service delivery:

- Buses cannot reassign route when particularly severe delay is encountered, unlike most other traffic.
- There is a wide and increasing variability in delay, which is quite unpredictable. In practical terms it is impossible to schedule for extreme delay, as to do so would mean that buses were condemned to operating every trip as if it were a “worst case” scenario. Quite apart from the fleet being entirely unproductive, such a timetable would be unsaleable and irrelevant to the public. However, it makes it impossible to avoid buses on occasions being very late, with resulting knock-on issues such as late arrival to work for employees at the strategically important sites in Science Vale UK.
- Notwithstanding the above, we have a statutory duty under the Transport Act 1985 to run on time and reliably. Strict punctuality standards are set out by the Traffic Commissioners. To meet these standards demands that we account for the bulk of reasonably foreseeable delays, which means on many occasions, to avoid buses running early, they must “wait time” when traffic is more freely flowing than usual. This is a substantial drain on operating efficiency and resources, and also greatly exasperates the travelling public, reducing the attractiveness and potential of bus services in the area.

- Our driving staff are frequently the first people on which the travelling public vent their frustrations. This is increasingly contributing to our challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, in what is a challenging labour market following the impacts of the pandemic and Britain's exit from the European Union.

Oxford Bus Group (OBG) recognises that the proposals represent among the largest capital investments in transport in South Oxfordshire in a generation. This reflects the scale of growth that is committed to support the development of the science and innovation cluster known as Science Vale UK. This includes large-scale residential growth as well as commercial and research/development space. Didcot, as the largest town in Science Vale and a major rail junction, is at the centre of the development strategy in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031, Parts 1 and 2 adopted in December 2019 and October 2019 respectively (VoWHLP); and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, adopted in December 2020 (SOLP).

Science Vale UK is recognised as being of strategic significance at a national level, to the UK's future competitiveness and prosperity, as well as contributing through its research to global quality of life. Supporting the dynamism of Science Vale UK, the absolute and relative scale of growth of Didcot, continuing a vigorous growth trajectory that started in 2011, is recognised by Government in its designation as a Garden Town.

2.1. Western Section: A4130 dualling between Milton Interchange and B4493 Station Road/A4130 Didcot Northern Distributor Road (NDR)

Multiple services use part or all the A4130 west of Didcot. This reflects the role of the road to facilitate local as well as longer distance flows. The principal services are the combined X34/X35 route group which is the strategic link between Didcot station and town centre, Great Western Park, and Harwell Campus operating every 15 minutes. Local services 23 and 23A also use the whole length of the link.

The most serious issues concern delay arising from multiple junctions. The biggest issues reflect a lack of junction capacity at the point the NDR intersects the east-west A4130 and B4493 link running east-west south of the railway. This affects all three arms used by bus services.

The link passes recent residential development north of Great Western Park, and also runs directly past the initial phases at Valley Park, where construction has now begun on primary infrastructure. The lack of bus stops on the eastern end of the A4130 partly reflects the nature of the road and the weight of traffic currently on it. As well as unloading the major junctions, the proposed dualling scheme will also provide scope for these bus stops to be provided, improving access to bus services in particular for residents of the Dudcote Field and Robin Way areas of Great Western Park.

2.2. Science Bridge: A4130 at Valley Park to NDR at Collett

The bridge directly unloads both the existing A4130 links and the important roundabout mentioned above, and the A4130 Northern Distributor Road north of the town. This includes another roundabout junction on the existing A4130 immediately north of the Great Western Main Line, where Milton Road is the western arm, and Basil Hill Road the eastern. By virtue of its diameter and its location close to the rail overbridge, this junction is equally challenged, and delays on the southern arm can block back to the junction south of the railway.

However, the main public transport movement is east to west across the A4130 between Basil Hill Road and Milton Road. This is the busiest bus corridor in South Oxfordshire by a considerable margin, being the main link between Didcot station and town centre, and Milton Park. Services operate as frequently as every 5 minutes in each direction across the junction at peak time, something typically only seen in dense metropolitan contexts. Beyond Milton Park most of these services continue to provide links to Wantage, Abingdon and Oxford, as well as the wider Science Vale UK.

Each and every bus route serving Science Vale UK that we operate runs across this roundabout at some point, with one minor exception (service 92, a local town shopper service). Disruption and delay here thus adversely affects our entire operation.

There is no credible means of providing relief to this area without the scheme. The A4130 rail overbridge and the proximity of the roundabouts to it at either end create obvious multiple serious engineering constraints to an on-line improvement.

The Science Bridge will also directly service the bulk of the former power station site, which represents one of the largest employment development sites in the SOLP2035.

2.3. Culham River Crossing: A4130 Collett to A415 at Culham Science Centre

North of Didcot the level of bus service is much lesser. Historically Ladygrove, south of the A4130, was close enough to the town centre to walk or cycle, while the station is immediately accessible. However, as Didcot North East has come forward at scale and pace, regular services are now established to and through the area through route X36, and it is expected that this service will develop further as Didcot North East is built out.

It is the absence of regular links across the Thames towards Culham and South Oxford, including the Oxford Eastern Arc from Didcot and committed developments to the north that is the main issue here. These form a key element of a sustainable connectivity and movement strategy in support of the SOLP2035, and are also featured in the current County LTCP5 as well as its predecessor. Notwithstanding these policy aspirations, chronic congestion on the approaches to the existing river crossings make it all but impossible to

envisage their implementation in a form that would be relevant to the public, sufficiently reliable, and commercially sustainable in the longer term. Without these links, major development north of Didcot, at Culham, and potentially at Berinsfield cannot be anything other than greatly more car-dependent than it ought to be.

It is also very important to note that there is a policy aspiration in SOLP2035 for a regular bus service from the Chalgrove New Town to Didcot, running every 30 minutes. It is impossible to see that this could be provided without relief to the A415 and a suitable river crossing and direct link to Didcot, that this element of the proposals would deliver.

This package of bus service improvements represents one of the most ambitious public transport network interventions anywhere in the County, or, for that matter, in Southern England. They would transform the options for current and future residents of Didcot and wider South Oxfordshire to reach key employment destinations at Culham Science Centre, ARC Oxford, Oxford Science Park and the East Oxford research hospitals. Equally, in the opposite sense, the new bus routes that the scheme would facilitate would provide crucial connectivity from large parts of Oxford including the key knowledge and research sites mentioned above, to other parts of the Science Vale UK cluster, helping to facilitate the agglomeration benefits of the cluster in a radically more sustainable manner.

The services involved are relatively long distance and by their nature, need to be reasonably competitive against driving a private vehicle both on frequency and journey time. To be economic to provide, buses must be able to make consistent swift progress. Only the scheme proposals can facilitate this.

Delivering all this depends, in its entirety, on the delivery of the northern elements of the proposals. To that extent, the proposals should not be viewed simplistically and crudely, as a “scheme for cars”. They are more accurately and properly understood as the core of a much wider multi-modal integrated transport strategy: something that to date seems to have been overlooked in much of the discourse surrounding the proposals.

2.4. A415 Clifton Hampden Bypass: Culham-A4074 Golden Balls Roundabout.

Much of the discussion above regarding the Thames Crossing is equally relevant to this fourth, easternmost section of the proposals. This works as an integral element of the scheme, to facilitate the major new cross-District bus services we have outlined above.

It is essential that these bus services are provided, among other things to substantially damp additional traffic demands that would otherwise arise on the A4074, through Nuneham Courtenay, towards Sandford and the wider area south of Oxford. Nuneham Courtenay village is a long-recognised “pinch point” on the corridor. There is no credibly deliverable strategy to mitigate this problem that does not involve mode shift to bus, and in particular, to creating the new

direct strategic bus service links we describe above. Naturally these measures would also serve to transform the effectiveness, reliability and attractiveness of bus on the wider A4074 corridor from Wallingford, Benson and Berinsfield to Oxford City, and south towards Reading.

We are working vigorously in partnership with the County Council, to define and implement separate proposals on the A4074 to this end. These are rather less advanced than the scheme proposals, but would strongly synergise with it. This includes a substantial “Transport Hub” on the A4074, sited to serve both the A415 and the A4074 with flows arriving from both the south west – where the proposals would be transformative for bus – and from the south east down the A4074.¹

3. The role of the proposals in the adopted development strategy for the area

This background is set out fully in Chapter 1, 4 and 6 the Planning Statement (PS) accompanying the application. However, we would strongly emphasise the interdependence of the adopted development strategies with the delivery of the HIF proposals, as described in Section 1.1.6 and 2.1 of the Planning Statement. This lies at the heart of the case for the proposals.

The development strategies in both adopted Local Plans are advanced in delivery, certainly where Didcot and its immediate environs are concerned. It is essential that the supporting investment represented by the proposals is duly delivered.

As we make clear in our discussion above, the scheme needs to be read properly as the key component of an integrated multi-modal transport strategy. This will create credible new options for cycling as well as public transport, both for existing and new residents, where few if any currently exist. **Not progressing with the scheme does not represent an “either-or” choice, with a view to some kind of alternative strategy that will meet both existing and future mobility needs with sustainable modes. No such strategy exists.** Given the acute limitations of the existing highways and junctions in the area north and west of Didcot, we have serious concerns that any realistically effective alternative strategy could be worked up in the foreseeable future, much less delivered.

Two major urban extensions are now underway concurrently known as Valley Park, west of Didcot in Vale of White Horse (VoWHLP Strategic Allocation 10 4254 dwellings); and Didcot North East (DNE) also known as “Willington Down” and “Nobel Park” (SOLP Allocation H2 consented for about 2100 dwellings across one principal and several smaller controls. These follow the recent completion of Great Western Park (3300 dwellings) that straddles the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse boundary.

¹ Oxfordshire BSIP October 2022 Proposal C10 page 53

Substantial further development is anticipated adjoining the town, and in the wider area. In addition, a number of smaller sites adjoining DNE have been consented, many at appeal, accounting for a few hundred additional dwellings. One notable feature of these is that they will all deliver affordable housing at a policy-compliant 40%. The main DNE consent will deliver just 22.5% affordable due to viability constraints.

All this follows substantial growth that has taken place in the town and wider area including in many villages. Much of this, especially in the Vale of White Horse immediately north-west and west of Didcot, came forward outside the plan-led system, in the period prior to the adoption of the Local Plans, under the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). By its nature this development was permitted without an overarching strategic transport mitigation framework. The high and sustained pace of development, including in the period 2010-2013, well evidences the economic and demographic vitality of the area. Thus, we strongly endorse the contention made at 1.1.7 of the PS that *“the Proposed Development’s infrastructure will also help to minimise current issues resulting from historic housing and employment growth.”*

The Committee Report of 26th July 2016 accompanying the DNE planning application² makes abundantly clear that any level of strategic growth at and around Didcot risked creating severe and widespread traffic impacts. The background to this, and the policy that supported the then-current Local Plan strategy, is set out therein at paragraphs 6.27-6.33. The four schemes that comprise the proposals under determination are expressly referred to in para 6.30. A much broader range of transport measures and mitigations is also listed in paragraph 6.31. DNE was consented on the clear understanding, and with express policy support that also required the delivery of these schemes, with funding required from sources at that time yet to be confirmed.

Within Vale of White Horse, the planning consent for Valley Park³ also makes explicit that the County Council could only support the delivery of the site in the light of the securing of the delivery of the package of strategic transport interventions secured by HIF 1. This too, was made clear in the County’s transport technical responses and to the Planning Committee in the report dated 16th February 2021.

To directly quote the Valley Park Committee Report *“It is important to note that whilst the TA for this development proposal has been approved by OCC, the said TA assumes delivery of the Didcot HIF infrastructure. Without the HIF infrastructure being secured the building out of this development site would not be supported by OCC as the Local Highway Authority. The need for this key infrastructure is confirmed by Local Plan Core policies, 7, 17 and 18.... **The HIF funding that is key to the delivery of crucial strategic highway infrastructure has been secured.** A revised S106 highway / transport agreement has been drafted to bring forward the delivery of key on site highway infrastructure; thereby lessening the traffic impact of this site in the area while*

² SODC Reference P15/S2902/O

³ VoWHDC Reference P14/V2873/O

the HIF infrastructure is being delivered. With government funding secured alongside an appropriate infrastructure mitigation package in place, the county council continues to have no objection to this development site; subject to the completion of a S106 agreement and a S278 agreement". (Our emphasis). It is important to note that this report post-dates the May 2021 elections and formally represented the position of the current Oxfordshire County Council administration to the Local Planning Authority.

To clarify the point made at section 1.1.6 and 2.2.1 of the PS, one strategic allocation such as Land at Hobbyhorse Lane Sutton Courtenay (VoWHLP2031 Strategic Site Allocation 5; 200 dwellings), and a number of smaller permissions in and around north and north east Didcot, are subject to policy restrictions or "Grampian" conditions that directly reference delivery of elements of the current proposals. Attempts to bring these forward over a number of years in advance of the planned infrastructure provided by the application schemes have been made, but refused, and have subsequently failed at s.78 Appeals, all on the grounds of the severity of cumulative residual unmitigated transport impacts on the highways network, set out originally at paragraph 32 of NPPF (2012 version) and now stated at paragraph 111.

We take a keen interest in the operation of the development management system not just in Oxfordshire, but across the extensive tracts of Southern England within which we and other sister bus companies in the Go-Ahead Group operate. In our wider knowledge, it is very rare indeed that the so-called "severity test" is determinative in s.78 appeals. It is therefore entirely right to conclude that without the HIF1 proposals being delivered, much existing committed development would need to cease at already-fixed thresholds within planning obligations. Several Strategic Allocations in the SODC Local Plan 2038 would become undeliverable within the current planning policy context, including at Culham. There is no obvious strategy, based on proper evidence that has yet been outlined or tested, that would support further growth in Science Vale UK, especially east of the A34 and south of the Thames either on current allocations or on alternative sites. The allocation of £218m of HIF funding is predicated on exactly these facts.

The matter does not end there. In the event that the SOLP fails, as a direct consequence of the failure to deliver the proposals, then housing need remains. It is sometime easy to forget, in the arcane debates about quantifying this need, that behind the statistics are real people and families; as well as pressing skills shortages, including in our own business in Didcot. There are also further consequential effects on the delivery of public services across Oxfordshire, as a direct result of housing costs and availability, including in Didcot. Our Thames Travel business, with its depot in Didcot, has a persistent and serious shortage of establishment that we are barely covering with large numbers of agency staff, despite very large increases in salaries. We have a far more serious problem staffing our Didcot operation than that in the City of Oxford itself.

Whatever precise approach the current or future governments elect to take to "substantially boost" and then maintain the supply of affordable housing, without the ability to progress with the current plan, a serious lacuna opens up, that is

highly likely to trigger a resumption of speculative applications. Because the problem most directly affects the SOLP area, and is tied to its housing requirements, the tendency will therefore be towards wider dispersed development across rural South Oxfordshire, north/east of the Thames and beyond the Oxfordshire Green Belt. They will be in smaller, much less sustainable settlements, relatively distant from all employment and services – and in particular the research, knowledge and business growth in Science Vale UK.

The trips that would arise from this outcome cannot but entrench exactly the causes of current problems. The distances involved, the intensely intricate and complex patterns of demands, and chronic congestion simultaneously make it impossible to provide relevant public transport choices, and also rule out walking and cycling. The car is the only realistic option. Such a pattern of growth will be entirely antithetical to securing the kind of reduction in personal car dependency and use that national and local transport and local plan policy is seeking.

Therefore, far from supporting a reduction in car dependency, refusing the proposals are actually likely to materially reinforce it, as it is likely to drive an extreme dispersal of development, at least in the short-medium term. This would further aggravate existing traffic difficulties across both the pinch points in Science Vale UK, and even more broadly – such as on the A4074 and A4130 around Wallingford and at between Crowmarsh Gifford and Golden Balls.

However, the nature and effectiveness of Science Vale UK extends well beyond Didcot. The extensive area extends to Wantage and Grove, and also draws significant labour from Wallingford and north/east of the Thames. Science Vale UK is also polycentric, given that major R&D sites emerged from the legacy of activity at several large post-war installations that had military origins and among other things, were sited somewhat removed from existing significant settlements at Didcot, Abingdon and Wantage.

The Science Vale UK cluster cannot be properly understood without reference to its very strong links to the City of Oxford. The Oxfordshire technology cluster, with the City of Oxford and University at its centre, continues to evolve. In particular, major sites have emerged more recently on the southern edge of the City at Oxford Business Park - now referred to as ARC Oxford - and the Oxford Science Park. In all senses, patterns of movements reflect the deep interconnectedness between businesses and other organisations and between places.

This is well exemplified by the interest of the University of Oxford in providing for greatly improved public transport mobility between its science facilities in Oxford City Centre, and Harwell Campus. This includes a half-hourly express services ST1 which we have operated since 2019 in partnership with them.

More complex and extensive is our work with MEPC at Milton Park, North of Didcot, where we have integrated into the wider public bus network, a local bespoke shuttle service run in the past. The synergies we have realised from

this allow us to run a much more frequent and comprehensive pattern of services. For employees at Milton Park annual local bus travel is now on offer for just £20 per annum within Didcot and its immediate vicinity. Mode share for bus has as a result more than doubled since the pre-pandemic period, helping directly to reduce the share of single occupancy car trips to under 55%. Bus mode share now exceeds 20% and rising. This is unparalleled for this kind of development in a peri-urban context.

We have now initiated deeper collaboration with Harwell Campus with a view to replicating these kinds of results.

4. Conclusion

Oxfordshire County Council's own LTCP5, seeks a reduction of 25% in single occupancy car journeys by 2030, and a halving by 2050 from the baseline – among the most ambitious mode shift targets we are aware of nationally. Nationally, there is an acknowledgement that substantial reassignment of personal mobility away from private cars is essential to meet the national legally-binding net-zero carbon emission in 2050, even accounting for complete electrification of the car fleet.

All this, as well as the committed plan-led growth demonstrates that bus is, and needs increasingly to be, at the heart of the transport strategy for Science Vale UK.

For the large majority of journeys to from and between the key destinations in Science Vale UK, only high quality, fast, frequent and reliable bus services can provide a credible alternative for car journeys. In the same way, key gaps in provision – in particular between development to the north of Didcot and Culham/Abingdon, and towards the southern edge of Oxford, must be filled if wider local and national transport policy goals are to be realised. New bus service links across the Thames, to the north of Didcot, can only be achieved if the HIF1 proposals are brought forward.

While we have not focused on the matter in this response, it is also important to note that segregated cycling infrastructure is also to be created as part of the proposals, improving the viability of this as a modal choice also.

We must emphasise that not progressing the HIF1 proposals does not lead to a greater likelihood that active travel and public transport will offer a step change in the quality of alternatives to the car. Perhaps counter-intuitively for some, it will be more likely to have precisely the opposite consequences.

Failure to deliver HIF1 directly threatens the long-term sustainability of the current bus service offer, as congestion will continue to build to levels as acute and as chronic as are already evident on the A40 between Witney and Oxford. Experience across the County and well beyond makes plain that slower, less reliable bus services cannot grow patronage, and rather tend to decline.

Refusal of the HIF1 scheme demonstrably entirely prevents the achievement of important new bus services to the north of Didcot in the medium to long term, that are essential to supporting mode shift away from car use between the eastern end of Science Vale UK and the rapidly developing technology and knowledge cluster sites south and east of Cowley, in the City of Oxford.

Longer term, the consequences could be even more severe. The adopted local plan development strategy to deliver growth at Didcot – the most sustainable settlement in the Vale by far – would be cut off at the knees. The housing requirements this is aimed at addressing will not “disappear”. Meeting them is all but certain to lead to sites being taken forward and consented – in all probability outside the plan-led system – in locations across an extensive rural district to the east, that are otherwise unconstrained. The experience of the last decade has exposed exactly where these pressures are most likely to be relieved: Benson, Chinnor, Thame and Chalgrove. All these are remote from Science Vale; indeed, relatively distant from any higher-order centre. In each, the choice of public transport destinations is restricted, in Chalgrove and Chinnor, the level of service is actually very limited. This would strongly entrench existing travel behaviour, which is already highly car-dependent.

The proposals accord entirely with the statutory adopted development plans for the area. They are a fundamental component in the delivery of a multi-modal transport strategy for the immediate locality, and the wider Science Vale, with a high degree of ambition for active travel and public transport. No realistic alternative has been presented to address the mobility requirements of these duly-prepared and tested Local Plans.

Therefore, in the interests of directly supporting a step change in public transport efficiency, frequency, reliability and connectivity, and in accordance with primary legislation and in particular s.38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004, we respectfully invite His Majesty’s appointed inspector to conclude, with us, that the proposals that he has called in for his determination should be allowed.

Yours faithfully



Luke Marion
Managing Director
Oxford Bus Company and Thames Travel