

## Catcheside, Emily - Oxfordshire County Council

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**From:** Grace Lewis <Grace.Lewis@networkrail.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 06 January 2022 14:43  
**To:** Planning - E&E  
**Subject:** FW: R3.0138/21.- A4130 carriageway land to the north of Didcot

OFFICIAL



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My Ref: P/TP21/671  
Your Ref: R3.0138/21

Date: 6 January 2022

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)**

**APPLICATION NO: R3.0138/21**

**PROPOSAL: The dualling of the A4130 carriageway (A4130 Widening) from the Milton Gate Junction eastwards, including the construction of three roundabouts**

**LOCATION: 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**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your email dated **11 November 2021** together with the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Network Rail (NR) has reviewed the elements of the proposals which impact on, or are impacted by, the rail system. These are summarised as follows (referring to their locations by Map Area), and are addressed in our comments below:

- Area 4: Didcot new 'Science Bridge over the Great Western Main Line (GWML).
- Area 9: Appleford Sidings new bridge.
- Area 9: Appleford Level Crossing interface.
- Area 15-16: Culham road crossings of the Oxford to Didcot main line.
- Area Wide: Opportunity for rail to support construction phase.

Our review to date has focussed on the key elements above, some of which Network Rail has previously been engaged with. However, Network Rail may wish to make comments on other aspects of the proposals, as further details emerge through the planning application process.

The highways scheme interfaces particularly with the Didcot to Oxford rail corridor, which is a key strategic route for both passenger and freight traffic and is a regional priority for electrification. This has been evidenced by Network Rail's Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study (ORCS).

NR is generally supportive of any transport schemes that support access to the stations located on this route, however there are relevant aspects for the existing and future operation of the railway that also need to be highlighted.

#### New highways crossing of railway: Didcot Science Bridge

The proposals include a new crossing of the Great Western Main Line at a point adjoining the former Didcot Power Station site. The four lines to be crossed in this location comprise the Up and Down Main, the Didcot Relief Line and the Milton Siding. This section of the GWML is already electrified.

Strategic planning by the rail industry has identified that this part of the GWML is already subject to significant capacity constraints; and new proposals are being developed for additional passenger and freight services. Therefore, additional capacity is likely to be needed in the future, potentially achieved by four-tracking between Didcot and Swindon.

The Didcot Science Bridge element of the wider highways scheme is already benefitting from joint working between Network Rail and the scheme promoter. It is understood that Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) first approached NR (ASPRO) in 2014. The scheme was initially considered to be outside party, as there were no piers proposed on NR land, however once designs had been developed the needs for piers then arose.

Network Rail are currently engaged via a Basic Asset Protection Agreement (BAPA) for the design of the Science Bridge, with Approval in Principle in place and a letter of 'No Objection' being issued to OCC in October 2021. It is understood that OCC are currently tendering for a Design and Build Contractor.

Going forward, a Bridge Agreement and Easement (with Heads of Terms agreed) for the air rights over the railway will be put in place.

Stakeholders including the scheme applicants will be aware of the critical strategic nature of the GWML rail corridor, and Network Rail looks forward to continuing our collaborative work in support of this new bridge scheme.

#### New highways crossing of railway: Appleford Sidings Bridge

The proposals include a new road crossing of the single-track link from the Didcot-Oxford main line to Appleford Sidings, a busy aggregates terminal.

The existing operations currently utilise hopper and box wagon types that would not require a high degree of gauge clearance. However, based on wider policy aspirations towards decarbonisation, rail operators are reviewing options for accommodating new traffic and it would be appropriate to allow for this under future proposals.

Therefore, we recommend that the crossing design allows for W12 gauge clearance of the railway, to facilitate a wider variety of rail freight traffic to serve the site.

Network Rail does not itself own the Appleford sidings or its access- the NR land boundary is east of the point where the bridge would cross the access to the sidings. It is understood that the rail network beyond this point is owned and operated privately, by Hanson. Therefore, we recommend that consultations for this scheme should include direct contact with this landowner.

#### Appleford level crossing impacts

Network Rail has previously received a scoping opinion request for the Didcot Garden HIF 1 Scheme, application number R3.0047/20. Our response to this, dated 8 June 2020, highlighted that:

There are concerns in relation to the nearby Appleford Level Crossing as the scheme looks to cut off access to housing across the level crossing. Therefore, it is likely an alternative access over the railway will be required, such as the installation of a footbridge.

An assessment of the impact the development would have on the nearby Appleford Level Crossing should be included within any Transport Statement and / or Transport chapter of the submitted Environmental Statement. The assessment should include any suggested mitigation...

Clarification is requested whether or not this matter has been addressed by the assessments supporting the application. Section 16.3 of the Environmental Statement 'Consultation with relevant stakeholders' summarises comments received from other consultees, however there is no reference to NR's response mentioned above. The highways scheme passes close to the level crossing at Appleford and appears to include a private access to the adjoining residence (only). This section of the main line is heavily utilised by rail traffic and is forecast to experience increased demand for passenger and freight flows, arising from work associated with the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study. Consequently, we need to better understand the implications of this scheme for the Appleford crossing.

Specifically, Network Rail policy is to close level crossings where possible, to improve the safety of both the rail and highways networks. Consequently, we are keen to work with the scheme promoters to review any opportunities for the closure of this crossing.

#### Existing highways crossing of railway: A415 Abingdon Road

The proposals incorporate the A415 grade separated crossing of the railway at Culham. While there appears to be no proposals directing impacting the bridge, it is expected that the scheme will significantly increase flows of road traffic over this rail crossing.

As noted above the, Didcot to Oxford main line is heavily utilised as a strategic rail corridor and consequently major upgrading of this route is proposed, including electrification and the possible addition of a third running line.

We are keen to understand any assessments that have been carried out for the changes in traffic and pedestrian flows that are expected in this area, as these relate to both the A415 crossing and the adjoining minor road bridge south of Culham station.

Network Rail looks forward to working with the scheme promoters, to review the need for bridge improvements in the Culham area, taking account of the implications of both the highways schemes and future rail infrastructure requirements.

#### Rail transport of construction materials

Oxfordshire benefits from a number of active railheads, which are used for receiving aggregates in support of construction projects, and these would be well located relative to this scheme. The Didcot to Oxford route is also established as a part of the Strategic Rail Freight Network, bringing opportunities including increased provision for freight train paths under our future strategic plans.

We note that a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared, as explained in both the Didcot Garden Town HIF1 Scheme Environmental Statement Volume I Chapter 16 (Transport) and in the Transport Assessment. The CTMP details the high levels of HGV traffic that will be generated by the scheme, however it is disappointing to note that no consideration has been given to the use of rail transport for the construction phase of the scheme.

It is strongly recommended that, as part of an approach supporting sustainable construction, maximum use of rail is made for transporting materials required by this project. This should take the opportunity to exploit the presence of the railheads already established nearby, including Appleford among other locations.

Network Rail is keen to work with the applicants to develop a Materials by Rail strategy, building on experience elsewhere in Oxfordshire, where promoters of major schemes are actively working to incorporate the use of rail in supporting construction.

#### Asset Protection

Due to the proposal being next to Network Rail land and our infrastructure and to ensure that no part of the development adversely impacts the safety, operation and integrity of the operational railway we have also included asset protection comments which the applicant is strongly recommended to action should the proposal be granted planning permission.

#### **SAFETY**

Any works on this land will need to be undertaken following engagement with Asset Protection to determine the interface with Network Rail assets, buried or otherwise and by entering into a Basis Asset Protection

Agreement, if required, with a minimum of 3months notice before works start. Initially the outside party should contact [assetprotectionwestern@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:assetprotectionwestern@networkrail.co.uk).

#### DRAINAGE

##### **Didcot HIF1 drainage strategy report, part 5 (general arrangement drawing 4 of 19)**

Asset Protection will need to be engaged by Oxfordshire County Council to construct the new bridge over the Great Western mainline at MLN1, 54m0850y (approx).

##### **Didcot HIF1 drainage strategy report, part 5 (general arrangement drawing 9 of 19)**

To avoid confusion at any stage, the siding leaving the Down Oxford at DCL, 54m1166y is owned by Hanson Quarry Products and Network Rail has no interest in this location in terms of physical assets.

The land is registered to Hanson under title number BK30089, there is a 750mm I/D culvert proposed to be constructed beneath the private siding (Hanson) close to the operational railway, so therefore Network Rail would wish to see/ understand what measures are in place to prevent equipment or construction works distracting train drivers in the vicinity.

#### EXCAVATIONS/EARTHWORKS

All excavations / earthworks carried out in the vicinity of Network Rail's property / structures must be designed and executed such that no interference with the integrity of that property / structure can occur. If temporary compounds are to be located adjacent to the operational railway, these should be included in a method statement for approval by Network Rail.

#### GROUND DISTURBANCE

The works involve disturbing the ground on or adjacent to Network Rail's land it is likely/possible that the Network Rail and the utility companies have buried services in the area in which there is a need to excavate. Network Rail's ground disturbance regulations applies. The developer should seek specific advice from Network Rail on any significant raising or lowering of the levels of the site.

#### PILING

Where vibro-compaction/displacement piling plant is to be used in development, details of the use of such machinery and a method statement should be submitted for the approval of Network Rail's Asset Protection Engineer prior to the commencement of works and the works shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement.

#### FOUNDATIONS

Network Rail offers no right of support to the development. Where foundation works penetrate Network Rail's support zone or ground displacement techniques are used the works will require specific approval and careful monitoring by Network Rail. There should be no additional loading placed on the cutting and no deep continuous excavations parallel to the boundary without prior approval.

Yours Sincerely,

#### **Grace Lewis**

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