

**CASE REF: APP/U3100/V/23/3326625
LAND BETWEEN A34 MILTON INTERCHANGE
TO
B4015 NORTH OF CLIFTON HAMPDEN**

**PROOF OF EVIDENCE
(Local View – Impact on Residents)**

**Topics 1 – 9
Topic 14**

Sam Casey-Rerhaye

for

NEIGHBOURING PARISH COUNCIL JOINT COMMITTEE (NPC-JC)

29 January 2024

Introduction

Proof of Evidence for a *local view of the impact* of the proposed roads & bridges collectively known as the 'HIF1' infrastructure

Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye: Parish Councillor Culham Parish Council and South Oxfordshire District Councillor for Sandford & the Wittenhams ward. Resident of the area for 19 years, parish councillor for 14 years and District councillor since May 2019.

Numbers in brackets after each statement refer to the relevant running order issues set out by the Inspector.

Infrastructure support for the proposed new housing

1. Relevant housing sites were justified as sound in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP2035) in a large part by their sustainable locations: for Culham (Strat 9), next to a mainline railway station and easy road access to Abingdon; for Didcot sites, next to a town with multiple facilities and a major mainline railway station and Milton Park industrial estate; for Berinsfield, alongside main A4074 Oxford to Reading road (Issues 1,4).

Evidence: SOLP 2025, Strat 3, 8,9 & 10 (Core document G.1)

2. New cycle routes have been long planned and required, eg. Science Vale cycle network, to support growth in this area of employment; new bus routes have been repeatedly requested by local parish councils and people to morning and evening commuter congestion and relieve school time congestion, controlled pedestrian crossing at busy interchanges (Issue 3,4,6)

Evidence: Culham Community Led Plan 2014¹ (**Appendix D** - core doc G.7)

Evidence: Science Vale Cycle Route Plan² (Oxfordshire Co Co) (**Appendix E**)

3. Currently, about half of regular employees at UKAEA come from Abingdon and Didcot and most of these should have no need to use a car to commute to work if the improvements in 2 above were implemented. There is a nursery on site, so the type of journeys to work that include a separate nursery drop are not needed (Issues 1,2,4)

Evidence: UKAEA Travel Plan from Masterplan³ (**Appendix F**)

¹ Hyperlink disabled~https://www.communityfirstoxon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Culham_Plan_2014_FINAL_jun.pdf

² Hyperlink disabled~<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/roadworks/major-current-roadworks/science-vale-cycle-network>

³ Hyperlink disabled~<https://culham.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/233-UKAEA-Masterplan-External-22-July-2022-Low-Res.pdf>

Route chosen.

4. Land safeguarded in SOLP2035 has not been used. A new route, proposed much later and used as the final route, comes much closer to housing in Appleford and school and housing in Culham. This means the health impact on residents of these areas is likely to be greater. This route includes features that are more difficult and costly to build a road across. (Issues 1, 4,6,7,9)

Evidence: p.50⁴ (**Appendix K**)

5. An originally proposed route to the east of the railway that would have been further away from existing housing, quarries, Appleford sidings and ponds, was dismissed for apparently weak reasons of issues with ancient land works and views from the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL). Extremely large and high new buildings on Culham Science Centre are more intrusive on the views from Wittenham Clumps and NWDNL but have been given planning permission. The least disruptive route for villages and the most convenient for the growth at Culham Science Centre and Culham new residential site would be due south from the entrance to Culham Science centre connecting to Sires Hill/Ladygrove junction. (Issues 4,11,13)

Evidence: Screenshot of Google maps/HIF1 map (**Appendix C**)

6. For at least half of the new houses in NE Didcot development, the obvious route to access the new HIF1 road/Thames bridge will be to go THROUGH Appleford village (B4016), so they can use the bridge to access Culham Science Centre and the Europa school and the new proposed secondary school at the Culham residential site (Issues 2,6.7,14)

Evidence: as above

7. Appleford village does not have a primary school and a large number attend the Sutton Courtenay school. Most children are driven there because there is no safe alternative and there are no plans for any. The proposed HIF1 route means children being driven to school in Sutton Courtenay have to cross over a 50-mph main road at rush hour each morning. The road cuts off the natural connections between these two villages and the use of the facilities in Sutton Courtenay by Appleford residents – pubs, restaurants and shop which are lacking in Appleford (Issues 1,2,3).

Evidence: HIF1 plan of road between Appleford & Sutton Courtenay (Appendix J)

8. The inclusion of a junction (proposed roundabout) between the B4106 and the proposed HIF1 road constructed between Appleford and Sutton Courtenay will increase the rush hour density on the B4016 passing through Sutton Courtenay. It

⁴ Hyperlink disabled~<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/hif1sor-dec22.pdf>

will be used to get to the A415 by traffic approaching from the west and will be a shorter route for drivers. **This point is underpinned by the totally inadequate modelling of East-West traffic through Sutton Courtenay and the failure to allow for induced traffic and for all the other reasons set out on pages 19-20 under “Sutton Courtenay” in the Joint Parishes Statement of Case.**

9. The traffic modelling that forms the basis of this planning application does not take induced traffic into account.

Existing congestion issues

10. Congestion is generally at peak times only. For the majority of the day and at weekends the A415 and over two bridges at Culham and Clifton Hampden traffic flows well and have little congestion at all (Issues 1,3,4)

Evidence: OCC own traffic surveys

11. Congestion around Didcot is a peak time only, particularly at the junction with Great Western Park on A4130. At weekends there is congestion for access into the Orchard Centre along Hitchcock Way and local pinch points such as the Cow Lane tunnel under the railway line at rush hours and weekends –for which the HIF1 will make no improvement. (Issues 1,2,3,4).

Evidence: OCC own traffic surveys.

12. Public transport for and around Science Vale has been inconsistent over past decade. Bus services have changed with some being cut or routes changing, and train services cut and then re-introduced, both during the day and at peak time. Therefore, many commuters have not been able to rely on a consistent service and have relied on their cars. (Issues 1,3, 4).

Evidence:

Buses - 114/116 bus along A415 changed in 2013 and new service T2 replaced 116; 114 reduced to twice daily⁵.

T2 and 114 service ended in 2016⁶.

Bus 45 was launched in Sept 2019⁷.

⁵ Hyperlink disabled~<https://culham.org.uk/change-to-thames-travel-buses-from-8-december-2013/>

⁶ Hyperlink disabled~ <https://culham.org.uk/major-changes-to-public-transport-affecting-culham-science-centre/>

⁷ Hyperlink disabled~ <https://culham.org.uk/new-bus-service-for-culham-science-centre/~~https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/services/OXBC/45?date=2024-01-29&direction=outbound>

This is an **hourly** bus service with 2 further service to/from central Abingdon at peak hours. The bus connects other villages (Nuneham Courtenay, Sandford, Clifton Hampden, Burcot, the very outer edge of Berinsfield) and Cowley Templars Square with Culham Science Centre but only one service arriving/leaving to coincide with working hours at the centre.

There was more than a **3-year gap** (2016-2019) where no bus services ran past or near Culham Science Centre

Bus 33 runs between Oxford and Wallingford passing through Abingdon, Culham, Sutton Courtenay to Didcot. This is an hourly bus service that is well used at peak times. It does not go near Culham Science Centre and would take 40 minutes to walk from the nearest stop to the Centre, from Culham High Street along Tollgate Road, crossing the A415 at traffic lights with no pedestrian crossing.

Appleford is not served by any bus route.

Trains from Didcot to Culham and Culham to Oxford have historically had a very sparse service even during working hours for Culham Science Centre. Trains stopped at Culham at most once per two hours outside office peak times (before 8.30am and after 5pm). Trains stopped at Appleford and Culham on an alternate basis. Current train timetables are now hourly for Culham but remain at a 2 hourly interval or longer for Appleford. **Source: National Rail Inquiries**

13. Recent improvements in frequency and reliability of train services stopping at Culham and new bus services along A415 (bus 45) should go towards relieving commuter congestion when established, with encouragement/incentives from employers. Further permanent public transport additions could make a big improvement in congestion levels. (Issues 1, 3, 4)

Need for road connections between science sites of 'Science Vale'.

14. There is no evidence that a road connection between Science Vale sites would contribute to employment growth in this area. There is little to no travel necessary between personnel on Harwell, Culham or Milton Park research centres in relation to the research activities taking place at those sites. This has been confirmed by UKAEA Director. (Issues 1,2)

Evidence: discussions between local councillors and CSC

15. Travel associated with growth at the employment sites in Culham (Strat 8 in SOLP35) is mainly for commuter access. Commuter growth in this area can be
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served by employer travel plans, better active travel infrastructure both public and employer provided, and reliable public transport services and better maintenance of these (Issues 1,2,3,4)

16. New working patterns include working from home for part of the working week and fewer commuter movements at peak hours. UKAEA has stated in 2022 that only around 50% of its workforce was on site on any one day. (Issue 1)
17. Growth on the new employment sites are planned to be for science research-based industries (hence 'Science Vale') and would therefore not require improved road facilities that, for example, heavy industrial growth might require for increased large goods vehicles. (Issues 1,2,

Induced Traffic and unpredicted traffic movements' impact on Appleford

18. Induced traffic risks include Large Goods Vehicles from existing industrial sites and current planning applications for increases in these in time or volume. (Issues 5,6,7)

Evidence: Axis report for the FCC Application (MW.0167/23) to extend the Waste Transfer Facility - WTF (sometimes called Material Reclamation Facility -MRF). (**Appendix A**)

19. Routing agreements will be scrapped. A local Hanson manager said to Appleford Parish Council 'if there is a road there we will use it' (Issues 2,6,7)
20. The WTF alone accounts for 152 two-way HGV movements per day (para 4.1.4 Appendix A). Thus, HIF1 will have considerable HGV and LGV traffic along the elevated section overlooking Appleford. Much of this is currently routed at ground level and hidden from the village.
21. Most traffic **accesses the site from** the Didcot perimeter road. Some traffic enters & leaves via the corridor road exiting onto Appleford Road near Sutton Courtenay. (Issues 2,6,7)
22. If the road is built the following will happen (Issues 2,6,7)
 - i. Fully laden HGV traffic (23 tonnes ref para 3.3.3) heading north will exit onto HIF1 and have to accelerate up a steep incline creating noise and emissions for Appleford residents.
 - ii. HGV Traffic from the north will head south down the elevated incline, will have to turn right across northbound traffic to enter the Sidings Site.
 - iii. HGV Traffic exiting the Sidings site heading south towards Didcot will have to cross north bound traffic.
 - iv. All north bound & south bound HGV traffic will pass close to Appleford at height overlooking the residences on Main Road nearby.

- v. All existing heavy traffic will come close to the village of Appleford if HIF1 is built. Currently most HGVs enter unseen west of the rail line at ground level. With HIF1 all traffic will be seen & heard due to the elevation.
- vi. All this will be made worse with induced traffic - both heavy commercials and cars.
- vii. Without HIF1 Appleford only get cars and vehicles < 7 tonnes (weight restriction in railway bridge) to/from Ladygrove/Didcot or Ladygrove.
- viii. Northbound Ladygrove traffic will not go back (south) to the perimeter road but use the B4016 and go through Appleford. May also go through Long Wittenham.
- ix. Southbound traffic from Long Wittenham will go through Appleford to access the HIF1 road. Will happen particularly at rush hour.
- x. Traffic will use the route through Appleford and HIF1 will not reduce that volume.
- xi. The HIF1 route does not allow access to a historical right of way between Appleford and Sutton Courteney (Old Wallingford Way).

Evidence: **Appendices G H I & J** HIF1 designs for road adjacent to Appleford and Sutton Courteney.

‘Over engineering’

- 23. The scheme is a ‘sledgehammer to crack a nut’. There are, without doubt, congestion issues in and around this area at peak times. However, travel alternatives plus design of new site allocations which align with LTCP 5 policies, and climate/carbon/nature goals are all missing. (Issues 1,2,3,4)
- 24. There could be merits in some parts of the scheme for very local issues, but it has been presented as an ‘all or nothing’ project. E.g the Clifton Hampden by-pass may have merit if there was not a direct link to the A34. This link now creates a route for large goods vehicles which end up on a winding B-road (B4015) which is unsuitable for both LGVs and active travel modes for about a mile before arriving at the Golden Balls roundabout (Issues 1,3,8,13)
- 25. The risk of bringing more LGVs and induced traffic to the Golden Balls is that further traffic flows northwards on the A4074 through Nuneham Courtenay, a conservation village with houses built without foundations. (Issues 2,14)
- 26. Traffic flow projections suggest that the HIF1 scheme will actually result in more traffic passing through Clifton Hampden than at present. Without downgrading the A415 from Clifton Hampden to Berinsfield to a B-Road, not included in these

plans, traffic seeking to avoid the likely jams at Golden Balls will use the A415.
(Issues 1,2,5)

27. The proposal is very much an example of the type of biased thinking outlined in Create Streets report 'Computer Says Road'⁸ (Issues 1,2,4)

Evidence: p.11&12 for example; p.14 on using 'Vision & Validate' ; p.16 on the values TAG attaches to congestion at peak times versus noise, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, increase flood risks etc (**Appendix B**)

28. The proposal ignores locally supported, smaller schemes revolving around active travel and public transport - exactly what LTCP 5 policies and climate/carbon saving measures need, such as good quality, regularly maintained cycle lanes along existing routes, regular bus services, bus shelters, cycle parking that is safe and sheltered, safe well-maintained pavements, pedestrian crossings at busy junctions such as the A415/Tollgate Road junction (Issues 6,7,8,10).

Evidence: Create Streets Computer-says-road (Appendix B)

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⁸ Hyperlink disabled~ <https://www.createstreets.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Computer-says-road-1.pdf>