

HIF 1 Statement

Cllr Sally Povolotsky FRSA

Hendreds & Harwell

By Email

Dear Inspector

I am the county councillor for Hendreds and Harwell division, where I was elected in 2021. The division of Hendreds & Harwell has grown to such a level that in the boundary review its recommended to be 3 councillors (split into 3). I am writing to express my strong support for the HIF1 scheme and its importance in addressing the housing and infrastructure needs of my local communities. I have lived in the village of East Hendred for 12 years and congestion post pandemic is the worst I have ever seen it on the OCC maintained A and B roads as well as the A34 major road.

The HIF1 scheme plays a pivotal role in releasing the much-needed infrastructure for the new residents but also my future residents in developments like Valley Park. The percentage of affordable housing on both the Great Western Park development and the soon to be constructed Valley Park is filling a gap around social and affordable housing which is such a significant concern in our area. However affordable and social housing schemes are no good if residents and future residents cannot access their places of employment and the harsh reality is that currently the public transport and active travel provision locally isn't and won't be utilised to its fullest potential as the preference is to navigate the congested road conditions in your own vehicle, and so it's a chicken and egg situation, we can't get patronage of buses / trains until it's a viable alternative to the private motor vehicle. I have heard the arguments about how HIF1 won't promote sustainable and eco-friendly travel habits and I strongly dispute these claims which are based on some academic desk study. Human behaviour is simple if the alternative isn't quicker then why would anyone change a habit?

The road network between Milton Park / A4130 and Culham is a complex network of small roads, never built for HGV's or modern motor vehicles widths and the future weights of zero emission vehicles. HIF1 in my view is a critical infrastructure and you only need to speak to regular commuters to realise the convoluted journeys residents must take for community, leisure and transporting children to and from school / childcare / clubs. We currently have bridges in the area failing, like the Steventon bridge due to the weight and frequency of HGV lorries, which of course Brunel never designed for! Steventon is an automatic diversion route for any issues at Milton Interchange / Abingdon / Milton Park / A4130 / A34, and the network cannot cope. I have always maintained the commitment to the HIF1 infrastructure development is vital for the overall progress and prosperity of my division.

We have the congestion NOW, and as the Europa Spare Seats bus group has written in, these are children missing vital education due to the aging and unfit network to Culham, let alone the recent flooding in January 2024 because of Storm Henek, some days the children spent 2 hours on the bus each way due to the closure at Culham Bridge (Flooding). I have firsthand experience of this as a mother of a student attending the school, who started in January 2024. We see the issues daily, and the slightest bit of adverse weather / rain / extreme heat and anyone who was thinking about active travel or public transport, if they are fortunate to own a car, are sat back in the driving seat in the comfort, warmth and dry.

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Since I was elected, I have sat on the **HIF1 CAG (cabinet advisory group)**, where I have been the voice of my residents, other members sat on this CAG, and when we were taken on a tour of the site to look at impacts and alleviation only Cllr Enright (who was the cabinet lead at the time) and myself turned up. Until you see how all the schemes now and future scheme lock into HIF1 and the wider benefits, do I feel a judgement can be made. What's clear is that unlocking HIF1 does lead to a benefit of a real issue, and those of my future residents in the Valley Park scheme. HIF1 also leads to a connected science vale, which currently doesn't exist and as such puts pressures on other congested parts of the network.

There is no doubt of the expansion of Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham, which have a fantastic and positive economic impact on the county and locality but also for UK plc R&D. I hear what other councillors have said and the scholastic approaches of academic papers and 'theories', but my experience is daily, my residents' experiences are daily and my division is growing. There is no doubt about 'what's next' should HIF1 be approved which is my recommendation, and around how we discourage private single occupancy use of motor vehicles, but you can't even start to do that when the current inconvenience for public transport and the sporadic network of active travel isn't a viable or attractive alternative.

In short, our transport system cannot cope and our highways infrastructure is at capacity, the real time issue is traffic and congestion and we have thousands of homes being delivered off the A4130. The impact on daily lives is exhausting, the alternatives aren't viable in terms of efficiency or cost (bus or train), as its quicker to drive. There will be no modal shift if we have congestion, we have congestion so we have no modal shift.

I urge you to listen to the voices of local residents, alleviate concerns and impacts and I support HIF1 and especially the inputs of the CAG and our recommendations to make it an exemplar road scheme which actively encourages schemes for alternative modes of transport to single private car usage.

Kind regards

Sally Povolotsky
Cllr Hendreds and Harwell Division
Oxfordshire.