

DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND THAMES CROSSING (HIF1).

REVISED SUBMISSION BY EAST HENDRED PARISH COUNCIL, 6th JUNE 2023.

It is prepared by Roger Turnbull, a Transport Planner, formerly at Halcrows, Consultant Engineers, and Barton Willmore, Planning Consultants, with experience of modelling the London Docklands DLR River Thames Crossing to Lewisham & Parish Councillor.

East Hendred Parish Council OBJECTS to the HIF1 River Thames Crossing on these grounds:

1. **The proposals refer to The Vale Local Plan Part 1 Policies.** But Policies CP33 & CP34 only support sustainable transport, promoting the use of public transport, cycling & walking. There are no Local Plan Proposals for a Thames Crossing outside the District.
2. **The Vale Local Plan Part 2 Infrastructure Delivery Plan** only identified the A4130 widening & Science Bridge. The latter proposals blight the redevelopment of Didcot Power Station for mixed uses including a potential Didcot Rail Freight Terminal, supported by the Network Rail & Highways England Report on East Midlands to Southampton.
3. **The South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policy TRANS 3** only safeguards land for a crossing. More detailed appraisals would be necessary to justify a scheme that had not been fully designed or costed. East-West movements were considered the key issue at Didcot, to justify the A4130 widening & Science Bridge only.
4. **Traffic growth within Oxford & Cambridge has been avoided** by traffic management over limited bridge crossings. Avoiding additional road capacity across the River Thames is the simplest way to restrict traffic growth between the A417 Reading Road through East Hendred & the A415 Abingdon Road. That approach would comply with the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP) objective to reduce traffic levels.
5. **The benefits of the road scheme are short-lived**, with the Goodwin Report showing that the Systra forecasts reduce peak average speeds below 2020 levels by 2034, whilst the 2015 costs have increased from £40m for a Thames crossing, £26m for Science Bridge & £14m for A4130 widening to c.£300m today.
6. **The Value for Money has thus reduced.**

7. A Comparison with Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections proposals.

7.1 In May 2023, The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) reported on public consultation on its Making Connections proposals. They are based on City Deal funding for £1bn over 15 years to deliver 44,000 new jobs & 33,000 new homes. Its proposals will deliver:

- **Transforming the bus network** (with 5-10 mins frequencies) on new Greenway routes, extra services, cheaper fares & longer operating hours.
- **Investment in sustainable travel**, with new walk & cycle Greenway routes.
- **The creation of a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ)** by charging vehicles to fund improvements, but only after bus improvements are implemented, in 2025/28.

7.2 The key findings were that 78% of respondents supported cheaper, faster & more frequent bus services, 71% supported reducing carbon emissions, & 68% supported improved walking & cycling measures.

7.3 By comparison, the Sept 2021 AECOM Options Report rejected the following alternatives: Enhanced bus network & bus priority, Didcot Park & Ride, Improved rail services, Junction realignments & signalling, & Upgraded traffic signal control.

7.4 Instead, Oxfordshire County Council preferred a £300m road scheme, (based on an unfunded scheme costed at £79.5m in The Vale Local Plan Part 1 Delivery Plan, Table 5), to link relatively remote military bases at Harwell, & Culham, & enable housing growth for 15,000 homes, (Source: AECOM Didcot Housing Infrastructure Fund, page 8 paragraph 1.22).

7.5 Why is no evidence provided on travel growth or modal share between the Harwell & Culham employment sites? Why cannot a review of the Harwell Campus Travel Plan target a 25% reduction in car use? Existing car use is 86% of the modal share.

7.6 Walking & Cycling. Unlike the focus of the Cambridge proposals, the AECOM Report Appendix A on Walking & Cycling has no design or costed proposals, only User opportunities, contrary to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

7.7 Advice in NPPF, in paragraphs 110-112, encourages giving priority to sustainable transport modes such as pedestrians, cycling & high-quality public transport. For example, it explains why East-West Rail between Oxford & Cambridge is being progressed & why the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway is not.

8. AECOM Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund HIF1 Report, Sept 2021.

8.1 Baseline Conditions (page 25 of report) – 2011 Census Journey to Work Mode Share

	Didcot	Oxford	Oxfordshire
Walk	11%	19%	13%
Cycling	5%	18%	8%
Bus	4%	17%	8%
Train	7%	3%	3%
Car driver & passenger	72%	39%	66%

8.2 An assessment of the Baseline Conditions should have identified the high mode share by car to Didcot, compared to Oxford & Oxfordshire, (& low share by foot, cycling & bus), as the key issue on which Local Transport Plan policies, proposals & funding, should be focused. Yet this key issue is not addressed. Culham has only an hourly bus & rail service to Didcot & the Clifton Hampden Route 95 has no off-peak buses.

8.3 Multi-Mode Travel Growth Data – nether the AECOM nor the SYSTRA reports assess a comparison of Cordon Surveys & modelled travel flows across the River Thames for the Base Year 2020, or for 2034 with & without the proposals.

8.4 Without the publication of the assessment of traffic flows with & without the scheme, & their environmental effects, no decision can be made to progress the scheme due to the lack of robust evidence on alternative options, required by LTCP.

9 Professor Goodwin Report requested by the OCC Transport Scrutiny Working Party on the Systra Didcot Base Model Development Report, Appendix E, 2018.

9.1 The Goodwin Report concludes that:

- **The Systra report showed short-lived benefits**, & only looked at the effect of traffic generated by new development, overlaid on the Oxford Strategic Model.
- **It relied on the 2015/18 Dept for Transport National Traffic Forecasts**, which does not represent current base levels of traffic in 2023, affected by Covid & increased homeworking. The new Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP) page 106 is based on a 'Decide & Provide' approach, by which road schemes will only be considered after all other options have been explored.
- **It largely ignores other factors**, e.g. District climate change targets, the review of Travel Plans, revised car parking standards, new cycling & walking design standards, the new 20 mph village speed limits, new traffic management & housing design policies, support for active travel, & induced travel.
- **Induced travel generated by road schemes** has a negative effect even with just a 10% increase in trips from the growth in housing.
- **Carbon emissions may differ** if traffic management policies reduce traffic speeds on safety grounds, when compared with reduced speeds from traffic congestion. The reduction in carbon emissions from higher speeds would then be overstated.
- **Oxfordshire is not alone** in inheriting major road schemes from a previously controlled authority. Wales has decided to pause them.