

Planning Enquiry – HIF Corridor – Milton Interchange – North Clifton
Hampden

Speaker Notes – Sue Scane – 21/2/2024

Good Morning, my name is Sue Scane. To give you a little background in my interest in this scheme, I can tell you that I am the Deputy Chair of Didcot First, as well as being the Chair of Didcot Volunteer Drivers. In addition, I am a non-executive Director with the Civil Nuclear Police Authority, based on the Culham Science site; and a Board member of the Oxford Diocese including chairing their Buildings, and Glebe Committees.

I am also a long term resident of Didcot, having lived here nearly 30 years.

Prior to my retirement in 2016, I was the Director for Environment & Economy at the County Council, and prior to taking over that role, was for many years their Assistant Chief Exec and Chief Finance Officer. During my time at OCC I had involvement in the development of this scheme, although have only been party to public information and discussions since my retirement.

I was also a Non-executive director of UKAEA for 3 years.

My starting point for this statement on the scheme, is that I think it **MUST** go ahead.

The residents of Didcot accepted huge growth in housing, but it was in the light of promised new infrastructure. That infrastructure is still outstanding, and the traffic congestion around the town is now completely unacceptable.

There are still more houses being built in NE Ladygrove, and the start of yet another 4.5 thousand houses in Valley Park is expected imminently.

It's all very well people saying these people need to use public transport, or cycle or walk – I'm sure some of them will – but many will use cars, and the current road network has already reached capacity.

Secondly, some people will say they aren't opposed to the scheme, but it isn't the right route. This is a completely flawed argument, as a massive amount of work has gone into the investigations of numerous route

options, and whilst some other lines on a map may look preferable, there were always (often unseen) issues which precluded them from being practical. Examples of this are old land fill sites, or scheduled ancient monuments.

I am convinced that if it isn't this scheme, NOW, then there will never be the opportunity to get this route delivered, **and to deliver it is essential.**

For me there are a number of things which are particularly important about this route for the people of Didcot.

Starting at the A34 - Improvement in the linkage **to** the A34, and via the Science Bridge reducing the through traffic, which would no longer need to go as far into the town is the first things;

But for me, the most important thing is the construction of the new road leading to a new bridge.

The current bridges, at Culham and Clifton Hampden were not built to handle cars, let alone the volume of cars they have today. Both are at sites which flood, which is becoming an increasing problem.

In addition, the routes from Didcot to Oxford (without using the A34) mean going through the villages, with their chicanes, and other traffic calming measures, as well as along narrow country roads. A new purpose built road, with proper provision for cyclists, will be far safer for everyone.

My team at Didcot Volunteer Drivers take members of the community to medical appointments, both within the town, but also to the Oxford Hospitals. This new road scheme is vital for them. The delays and hold ups, caused by having to go through the villages of Sutton Courtenay, Long Wittenham and Clifton Hampden are time consuming and make for very unreliable journey times. The increase in journey times and mileage when the bridges are closed, for repairs – they are both ancient – or for flooding, adds to these journey times.

A return trip via Clifton Hampden to the JR Hospital is 34 miles; it rises to 44miles via Shillingford bridge, but that means delays going through the centre of Wallingford; or to 52 miles via the Wallingford by-pass.

The use of the A34 is shorter than the Shillingford/Wallingford alternatives at 38 miles, but the risk of severe traffic delays is much greater. And of course the A34 has been closed itself due to flooding only this last week.

Whilst it may only be a few miles each way, it is significant, and adds up both in cost and time to our often elderly clients.

When I attended the last Planning committee, I heard a number of detractors from villages who don't want this route near them. I do sympathise with them, but for many in the same villages a new road and bridge will reduce their current traffic flows. That would certainly be the case for parts of Appleford, and Clifton Hampden and for Long Wittenham. However, those who benefit rarely voice their opinions.

In fact, I believe that we are only here today because the original Planning Committee in July 2023 didn't accept all the evidence which was provided to it – perhaps it wasn't put across clearly enough for them, but I do believe it was available. People like myself who support the scheme didn't attend as we didn't think there was a problem with the planning, and I believe the committee was unduly influenced by the voices against the scheme at that meeting. We need to ensure that the few who are vocal are not taking away the advantages for the silent majority.

Much has already been said about the Economic development of the area, the national significance of Harwell and Culham, the need to be able to attract and retain people in the area; and their need to be able to travel both to work, and around the area.

I know that UKAEA are here to state the importance to their site, and the need for the scheme for their ongoing development, so I won't go into that in any more depth, other than to support them fully.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that whilst I accept that any road scheme is expensive, and acknowledge it will have some impact on the environment, I genuinely believe that to fulfil the promises made when the house growth was introduced to Didcot over a decade ago, that this scheme must go ahead.