

# **Alternatives to HIFI**

(Over 16 options originally proposed  
by Aecom - Of which,  
not surprisingly, they selected the first 4!)

Our comments are added - In italics & highlighted

**From the Trustees  
Milton Manor Estate  
Feb 2024**

Aecom Infrastructure & Environment UK Ltd  
Aecom House  
63-77 Victoria Street  
St Albans  
Herts AL1 3ER  
Tel: 01727b53500

*(These are the people employed by OCC who have produced a 10,000+ page application...one wonders at what expense? ...consisting of innumerable large folders with different headings)*

Three times revised: 4.6.21; 22.9.21; 23.9.21 by Associate Planners

**DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN  
HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (HIF1)**

**DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

*(This is one of the innumerable large folders – which we have laboriously read through and summarised as follows. It seems to be vital for everyone concerned study the above Statement before decisions are taken)*

September 2021

Project No: 60632497

Index shows 51 pages

In fact 190 numbered pages including

Appendix A	List of Referred Documents	pp 133-135
Appendix B	Initial Long List of Options	pp 136-139
Appendix C	Phase 1 Sift Results	pp 140-145
Appendix D	Phase 2 Sifting Criteria	pp 145-150
Appendix B	Construction Programme	pp 49 (April 22/Mobilise – Jan 24/Construction – June 25)
Appendix C	Departures from Standards	pp 50, 51, 52
Appendix E	Sifting Results (based on DFT)	151-154
Appendix F	Modelling	185-190

*Then the text changes to*

*"AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE FOR HIGHWAY-RELATED DEPARTMENT TEMPLATE" PP 1-5*

*(then it goes back to Appendix B – which is very confusing)*

A4130 Widening	pp 1-5 <i>Starts again 4 times under same title</i>
	pp 1-5
	ppi-6
	pp i-5

Science Park	1-4 + 3 unnumbered pages)
	1-6 + 10 unnumbered pages)
	1 only + 3 unnumbered pages)
Clifton Hampden	1 only + 6 unnumbered pages)
Bypass	1 only + 4 unnumbered pages)
	1 only + 5 unnumbered pages)
	1 only + 5 unnumbered pages)
Didcot Garden	1 only + 5 unnumbered pages)
Town	1 only + 5 unnumbered pages)
	1 only + 5 unnumbered pages)
HIF1	1 only + 5 unnumbered pages)

*All different dates, all the same headings  
Totally confusing page numbering*

On page 140 the various options (0-1-16) are judged according to various objectives and are subsequently "marked" accordingly.

### SUPPORT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

- Objective 1 Unlock the delivery of 11,711 additional homes in the Didcot Garden Town area; & more across Science Vale.
- Objective 2 Support the delivery of 4,847 affordable homes in the Didcot Garden Town area in support of the housing growth deal - & more across Science Vale.
- Objective 3 Ensure the impact of additional housing on the transport network is acceptable, & associated impacts on the transport network are adequately mitigated.

### SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

- Objective 4 Ensure the impact of employment on the transport network is acceptable; and associated impacts on the transport network are adequately mitigated.
- Objective 5 Unlock Commercial space at key employment sites across Science Vale; including D-Tech and Culham Science Centre.

### SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

- Objective 6 Future proofing provision of a flexible transport network to cope with future uncertainties & opportunities.
- Objective 7 Manage the need to travel, and where travel is necessary promote sustainable modes of travel.
- Objective 8 Minimise carbon emissions & other pollution such as water, noise & light & increase resilience to the likely impact of climate change, especially flooding.

- 1. AFFORDABILITY
- 2. DELIVERABILITY
- 3. ACCEPTABILITY
- 4. FEASIBILITY

*These are the four criteria on which "marks" are given to the various options.*

*NB1 Future proofing above is underlined because in actual practice very little, if any, thought appears to have been given to this.*

*NB2 The "marks" given for these various criteria seem to be almost entirely given on very arguable grounds indeed – and in many cases, without any but the most superficial grounds being named.*

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	A4130 widening	
	Didcot Science Bridge	
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	Clifton Hampden bypass	

*This is the Table of Contents of the whole DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT.*

OPTION ASSESSMENT REPORT  
(p137/8/9 lists 16 options +Option 0)

OPTION 0: DO MINIMUM – SCORE -17

“This includes no additional physical interventions, aside from those that are already committed, being undertaken on the network access across Science Vale. This includes all committed Local Plan developments.”

The Do Minimum option does not address any of the issues identified across Science Vale. Furthermore the option will not assist in any way with unlocking the delivery of homes across Didcot Garden Town and Science Vale as no additional capacity will be provided, thus making development unviable. Therefore this option has identified 5 show stoppers with regard to the scheme objectives (Appendix C Phased Sift Results p. 145) for objectives 1-5 which relate to unlocking housing and economic development.

In addition, this option scores poorly for the remaining objectives as it has a poor fit and will not enable these objectives to be achieved.

The option would be affordable, deliverable and feasible as no additional interventions are required; however this does not negate the show stoppers identified and may be perceived negatively if there are impacts for traffic growth which are not being managed.

OPTION 1: A4130 WIDENING – SCORE +20

Dual carriageway + 3m bidirectional segregated cycleway+ 2m footway on southern side.

OPTION 2: DIDCOT SCIENCE BRIDGE – SCORE +15

New bridge 15m wide + single carriageway + one-way cycleway+ 3m bidirectional segregated cycleway + 2m footway

OPTION 3: DIDCOT TO CULHAM RIVER CROSSING – SCORE +16

New link road from Collett Roundabout and A415 at Culham: +2 x new bridges + 4mbidirectional segregated cycleway + 2m footway.

OPTION 4: CLIFTON HAMPDEN BYPASS – SCORE +18

New single carriageway between B4015 Oxford Road to N of village & A415 Abingdon Road to W of village.

*It is not surprising, without being too cynical, that the four Options which will give Aecom most work have been listed at the beginning and have been given very favourable “marks”; and it is even less surprising that Option 0, which would have given them no work at all, is given a very unfavourable score!*

OPTION 5: ENLARGED BUS NETWORK ACROSS ENTIRE SCIENCE VALE & BUS LANES/BUS PRIORITY/FREQUENT & RELIABLE SERVICE – SCORE -3

OPTION 6: PARK & RIDE IN VICINITY OF A34 – SCORE -10

“Would serve both journeys into Science Vale and as a remote Park & Ride for journeys into Oxford.”

This option scores neutral for minimising the need to travel and promoting sustainable modes, as it requires travel to the Park & Ride which induces additional traffic in the local area. This option is expected to be a lower cost; however there will be significant capital cost involved with developing the Park & Ride including purchasing land.

This option will have very low acceptability as landowners may not support this proposal and the public are likely to prefer other options which are more flexible.

This option has low feasibility and deliverability as it will require significant land taken in greenfield land; and the land it will occupy has been earmarked for future development.

This option is unlikely to lead to the scale of change required for the development planned across Didcot and Science Vale and will not provide suitable capacity to enable the dependent development.

Therefore it scores a low fit against these objectives. It could be dependent upon additional road capacity in order to ensure reliable journey times, therefore above improvements to services may be unviable.

This option will not be very flexible in unlocking commercial space at key sites, as it involves infrastructure at one specific location.

Furthermore it may worsen the existing situation as it would increase the amount of traffic using the A4130 (to access the Park & Ride) increasing the congestion issues.

OPTION 7: IMPROVED RAIL SERVICES FOR DIDCOT TO OXFORD AND READING – SCORE -7

“Double existing services frequency; including at smallest rural stations at Appleford, Culham and Radley as the Didcot to Oxford line is already at capacity, this would require 4-tracking this line.”

Pro -Improved accessibility to Culham Science Centre, therefore partially unlock both housing and employment development at Culham Science Centre.

[Neutral on objectives 1-5, as limited to the one site]

Flexible network for the future; minimise carbon emissions and need to travel except sustainably.

Anti – Partially within Flood Zone 2

Very expensive – nbg for affordability (deliverability) feasibility due to 4-tracking Didcot to Oxford (land take/upgrade/bridges!). Also out of local control - & frequency dubious if access to stations limited.

OPTION 8: IMPROVED STATIONS AT DIDCOT AND CULHAM PLUS NEW STATION AT GROVE – SCORE +3

“Improved stations, including improved links to Culham Station. This will include upgrading the path between Culham Rail Station and Culham Science Centre. Aim = to provide a segregated path set back from the road for the use of pedestrians accessing Culham Science Centre from the train station. This would be future proofed for the Culham development.”

OPTION 9: JUNCTION REALIGNMENTS & SIGNALISATION – SCORE -22

“Junction realignment of key junction pinch points in hotspots across the local areas.”

\*\*\*Poor fit/already done/expensive

\*\*\*acceptability/feasibility/deliverability/affordability

OPTION 10: UPGRADES & COORDINATED TRAFFIC SIGNAL CONTROL – SCORE -14

“at existing signal-controlled junctions across Science Vale.”

\*\*\*Poor fit 1-5

Neutral feasibility/deliverability/low acceptance in isolation (as in case of Option 9)

OPTION 11: COMPREHENSIVE CYCLE & WALKING NETWORKS ACROSS SCIENCE VALE – SCORE -2

This option is a sustainable option and will help to reduce carbon emissions and other pollution.

However, it will be partially within Flood Zone 2 which is a key environmental concern.

It is also low cost and will be acceptable to the public. However, it may also be controversial if it involves reallocating road space away from private vehicles.

It will link into employment sites across Science Vale.

This option has neutral feasibility and deliverability scores, as SCVN routes 5 & 8 have already undergone design and planning with some small sections already built.

Furthermore an intervention around cycling is very unlikely to be enough to fully support the development across Science Vale and is therefore unsuitable on its own.

Improved walking and cycling should however be a key feature of preferred scheme options.

P.138 Comprehensive cycle & walking networks across Science Vale

Comprehensive cycle & walking networks within Didcot & Science Vale, including cycle links to other parts of Science Vale, cycle priority in Didcot town centre, and completion of the SCVN routes 5 & 8.

SCVN route 5 is a new cycle/pedestrian route from Didcot to Harwell Campus. This will follow the proposed SCVN route 5 which mainly follows the B4403 out of Didcot through Harwell and down Winnerway to Harwell Campus.

SCVN route 8 is a new cycle/pedestrian route from Didcot to Culham Science Centre, including new shared-use bridges over the river. Furthermore this option will include improved walking and cycling links to Culham train station.

OPTION 12: SCIENCE VALE BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) INCLUDING BUS ONLY RIVER CROSSING – SCORE -3

“Connecting Science Vale through a network of BRT routes in order to improve existing bus routes and frequencies.

Key corridors would be Didcot – Culham Science Centre and Oxford & Didcot & Harwell Campus. Didcot will become an interchange at Centre.

Segregated bus-only lanes with priority at junctions & a shared use path alongside Thames Bridge to encourage active travel”

Could lead to scale of change required – road capacity would mean some reallocation – marketing strategies required.

Sustainable

xLow affordability, very complex to deliver – significant land takes & CPO. Acceptable yes (but less cars??)

#### OPTION 13: SCIENCE VALE LIGHT RAIL LINK – SCORE -7

This option is unlikely to lead to the scale of change required for some of the development planned across Didcot and Science Vale; and therefore scores neutral/low fit for objectives 1-5.

This option would provide a sustainable mode of transport and minimise carbon emissions and other pollution.

However this option may have negative visual impacts across open land.

This option scores neutral for providing for a flexible transport network as whilst it is not very flexible due to the physical infrastructure required for light rail, it will help cope with future uncertainties and opportunities.

It is a very expensive option due to the infrastructure required and cost of running services.

This option will be very complex to deliver with many inter-dependencies with other aspects of the transport network which can impact upon the success of the scheme.

This option has very low feasibility as the likely involving significant land requirement and the complexity of implementing a light rail system.

The land take required and visual impact of the scheme are likely to lead to low acceptability of the option.

*Back to P.138 The above starts at page 140.*

Connecting Milton Park, Didcot & Harwell Campus by a light rail link.

Didcot Parkway would be the terminus with the route feeding in to direct train services from Didcot to Oxford (passengers will need to interchange).

High frequency service to be provided, with the highest frequency reflecting working patterns. Also to be timed to connect with services stopping at Culham if possible.

Opportunity to use emerging technology as part of the network.

This could also be operated by a tram.

#### OPTION 14: DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT – SCORE -4

“Similar to or expanding on the offer available elsewhere (such as demand responsive taxi-buses. Could replace some bus routes and instead provide more flexible services across the area.

Would work by example passengers inputting journey onto an app and matching up with others going alone in same direction...”

Very flexible and sustainable – but Oxford trial shows (a) still motorised (b) not very popular, (c) not costly but needs official support and some infrastructure.

OPTION 15: SMALL-SCALE BUS IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS SCIENCE VALE – SCORE -9

“Could include improved waiting facilities and bus shelters and information boards; tweaking of timetables, consultation with local bus companies.”

Flexible and sustainable – good affordability, feasible and deliverable. Mixed response from public “as some will be supportive of public transport intervention; however others will prefer a road-based solution.”

X But will not support development, and therefore four showstoppers are identified for objectives 1-4.

OPTION 16: A34 WIDENING – SCORE -12

...”in both directions for 13.5m from Milton Interchange to Hinksey Hill Interchange. Would mean a third lane in each direction.” “This option is suggested as an alternative to Option 3.”

x Will not provide significant capacity within Science Vale

xxx Not flexible/not carbon emissions cut/widening = bad environmental/ecological effects/unaffordable/difficult to deliver/unfeasibility

Negative public acceptability

OUR GENERAL COMMENTS

*This whole procedure seems almost slapdash. Various minor options are put in, only to be rejected out of hand; and various major options which could, in our view, profitably be studied to a far greater extent, are rejected or given negative “marks” on very dubious grounds indeed.*

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*The consultation process should obviously have started with 16 or more options put out for consultation and then considered seriously by all parties and all stakeholders. It is a travesty, in effect, to merely select four and consign the rest to a few obscure pages in one of the innumerable folders produced by Aecom.*

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*It seems to us that a combination of various of the rejected options might indeed work very well and need to be seriously studied before proceeding any further with these skewed planning proposals.*

FINAL NOTE

*It will, we hope, be clear to readers of this summary that we have not given in full the paragraphs from the Design and Access Statement relating to each option; but have in certain cases reduced them to what seemed to us to be the key points. Readers are therefore advised to look at the original text if they so require.*