

Wednesday 21st February 2024

HIF1 Government Inquiry Submission – Ryan Padgett

I would like to address the inquiry in a personal capacity as a resident of Didcot.

In doing so, I would **appeal in the strongest terms** against the rejection of the HIF1 plan for critical infrastructure by the Planning Committee of Oxford County Council and offer my **wholehearted support** in support for the proposals that are so critical for the future of our community.

Furthermore I would like to speak to represent the position of the **silent majority**, whose views are too often absent from these discussions, and to seek to represent those of the economically active who are so dependent on the HIF proposal, and many of whom are not fortunate enough to be able to attend a mid-week inquiry, or even do not know that an inquiry of such criticality for the future of our community is taking place.

So far there have been many references to the current and future needs to the residents of Didcot and South Oxfordshire, of those who come to the community for reasons of employment, either to work here in the Science Vale, of which we can rightly be proud, or to work in London. Unlike ALL the speakers so far, **I am one of those people** as I moved to Didcot in 2019 to be able to commute to London via train. And I like many others who have moved here, have shocked at how poor the local connectivity is.

I think it is important to first set these proposals in the **context of local and national trends**. The population of the UK has increased exponentially since 1997 with an increase by well over 10m people, with the rate of increase accelerating over recent years. In line with the national trends, the population of Didcot, and other parts of South Oxfordshire has exploded too, as has been evidenced through the submissions of many local councillors already. However, there have been minimal corresponding upgrades to the infrastructure – changes are already long overdue.

Housing is therefore coming. People speak of a climate emergency, but the **housing crisis** is already having far more immediate and profound effects on the lives of young people. There is already a national shortfall of four million homes, which only escalates in severity year on year and makes the dream of home ownership for young people ever more distant. And the housing which must come so that people have places to live must be supported by the underlying infrastructure.

The proposed HIF1 Plan is **therefore not merely a convenience but a necessity** for our community. It would serve as a vital enabling link connecting various neighbourhoods, providing efficient transportation options, and enhancing accessibility to essential amenities like schools, hospitals, and businesses.

Unsurprisingly therefore, this project has garnered **widespread support** from residents, community organizations, and businesses, and would undoubtedly contribute to the local economy by fostering better transportation connections and attracting potential investors and developers. It has enjoyed the support of Oxford County Council (OCC), South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and Didcot Town Council (DTC), where only recently a motion of unanimous support for HIF1 was passed by those present at the meeting.

This is not surprising given the HIF1 plan also provides the foundations to enable the future growth and prosperity of our town. There is almost 800,000 square feet of unmet demand **for laboratory space** in Oxfordshire and the plan provides the

opportunity for Didcot to contribute to closing that demand gap, brining well paid and fulfilling jobs to our town, but this can **only** be done if the underlying infrastructure is in place.

By delivering the capacity to support the future growth of our town, **the cynic in me suspects** t that this is the real reason that those objecting are so passionate about the defeat of these proposals. Those who **object to any and all developments**, often and increasingly wearing the opportunist faux cloak of environmental concern to mask their selfish and destructive nimbyism.

I understand that **genuine concerns regarding environmental impact**, cost, and other factors must be taken into consideration. However comprehensive plans for environmental mitigation and sustainability are already in place, and I suspect that there are no mitigations that **would satisfy the demands of the opposers**.

I and many others care passionately about the environment and sustainability. But we also must be able to travel to work. I personally walk or use bus or the train, wherever possible. But, for example, I need to travel to Nottingham tomorrow for work, and I would like one of the objectors to tell me how I can get there practically without using the road network. If I were to take the train, would have to take three different trains which would take over 4 hours. So will have to use car and the already congested road network to get to East Midlands Parkway and then get the train from there.

Therefore, would therefore finally ask If not this, then what. If not now, then when. We will not accept the impoverishment of our community to indulge the selfish self-interest of a vocal minority. I would therefore urge the inquiry to support the delivery of the HIF proposals in full.

Thank you for having the opportunity to speak on this matter and I remain hopeful for a favourable outcome.

Thanks,

Ryan

Ryan Padgett

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