

Claire James

From: Vic Johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: 28 September 2023 17:58
To: Palmer, Leanne
Subject: Appeal Reference APP/U3100/V/23/3326625

Dear Ms Palmer

I write as a concerned resident of Appleford in opposition of this planned road which will have a detrimental impact on myself and my fellow villagers through the noise and pollution it will cause not only during construction but especially when it opens to traffic.

Oxfordshire County Council is already aware of the detrimental impact of this proposed scheme as the recent environmental report in April 2023 confirmed the road will impose severe, permanent, and unmitigated noise damage to Appleford homes. This is from a report which failed to consider the existing increasing levels of intrusive noise we are already subjected to from the tip and railway sidings.

DEFRA has already designated part of southern Appleford as a noise important area, 1 of only 4 around Didcot. For railway noise DEFRA states that the population of these locations are likely to be at the greatest risk of experiencing a significant adverse impact to health and quality of life because of their exposure to noise.

The proposed flyover associated with this planned road at Appleford will cause irreparable damage in the form of not only a negative visual impact but excessive noise, vibrations and pollution.

If the proposed road and flyover is allowed this will further add to the already significant impact on health and quality of life of villagers as defined by DEFRA. The elevation of the road over the railway sidings will only be 60 meters away from dwellings. The bridge abutments will reflect the noise from the sidings back to residents along with noise caused by the gradient of the road to the bridge, but this has not been investigated. Noise screens will reflect noise from the sidings and will also cause a visual intrusion.

Oxfordshire County Council has not carried out any analysis of the existing noise. No noise assessment for alternative routes was undertaken so Oxfordshire County Council have not considered the route for the road to cause the least harm.

The environmental report therefore confirms this scheme does not adhere to national and local planning policy. It does not reduce noise impact to a minimum or avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life.

In addition, in June 2023 Oxfordshire County Council announced that air pollution is the biggest environmental risk to public health so much so that it aims to lower emissions of air pollution, reduce vehicle usage and establish homes and schools away from major roads. Why then is this policy not being implemented in this matter. Why is it acceptable to subject myself and fellow villagers to pollution from this major road scheme.

The application states no significant air quality effects are expected for human health. The air quality assessment however admits higher traffic flows and speeds are expected on the proposed road which could lead to higher emissions and concentrations of pollutants. No pollution monitoring has taken place in Appleford, therefore, no real data has been considered so the application findings are unreliable when it states there is no significant air quality effects.

The air quality model doesn't account for the raised road or follow advice from the UK Health Security Agency given to Oxfordshire County Council to address non threshold pollutions i.e., using World Health Organisation best information.

No health impact statement has been carried out to confirm that the road doesn't pose a health risk to the residents of the village as required by Oxfordshire Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP). The environmental statement fails in regard to noise, air quality, and health impacts of this road if it is allowed to go ahead.

Our Parish council alongside others has tried to work with Oxfordshire County Council to remove or reduce matters of concern such as the proximity of the road to the village and the flyover but their efforts have not been entertained by Oxfordshire County Council it appears that residents' concerns our health and welfare have little to no importance in this matter.

This road is being hailed as the solution to all problems solving congestion, but its well known and acknowledged by Oxfordshire County Council in its LTCP that new roads lead to induced demand, so more cars on the road which soon reaches capacity. However induced demand was not accounted for in the report prepared by consultants on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

Furthermore, Oxfordshire County Council acknowledges that new roads are not a sustainable long-term solution for Oxfordshire. The proposed scheme therefore does not provide a sustainable solution to alleviating congestion. So why is it being consider whilst alternative solutions have been ignored.

The planned road was conceived when less than 3% of people were working from home, currently around 30-40% now work from home. The assumptions and modelling for example traffic forecasts are extremely out of date pre-Brexit, covid and the latest committee on climate change report.

The planned road does not align with Oxfordshire County Council's LTCP policy 36 on road schemes specifically parts B, D or E which cover decide and provide traffic modelling.

In addition, the road would cause Oxfordshire County Council to overshoot LTCP 2030 targets on reducing car trips and will instead lead to an increase in car trips due to the lack of consideration of induced demand.

The recommendation of the UK Government Climate Change Committee progress report to Parliament was to get the UK's surface transport (which it considers is the highest sector of emissions) on track with the Paris Agreement all UK road schemes should undergo a net zero road review like in Wales. In particular this includes a criterion for new road that they should not increase capacity for cars which this proposed road clearly does. Oxfordshire County Council LTCP also states we need to change this to move to a sustainable transport system.

We have a transport and planning system which creates and locks in car dependency. Car dependant infrastructure i.e. roads support car dependant new development houses and economic development where predominantly travel to it is by car and then through induced demand it creates increased congestion and you enter a circle whereby you need to build more roads.

The planned road is based on car dependency going against Oxfordshire County Council policy. Since passing LTCP in July 2022 the case for road building to unlock housing development has been weakened as such an argument is based on old policy and an old approach of predict and provide. This obsolete approach assumes developments are car dependant and must be unlocked by car dependant infrastructure. This approach has been explicitly rejected by the current LTCP a material planning policy.

LTCP Part 36 D & E requires transport development to apply decide and provided completely undermining the argument that this road is needed to unlock the new houses and economic development in the area. It also provides an interface with planning authorities on new developments which has not been addressed in application.

Houses to be delivered by South Oxfordshire DC and Vale of White Horse DC should be consistent with Oxfordshire County Council's LCTP and be looking to reduce car use. Homes England's design team favour vision and validate which is effectively the same as the decide and provide principle to be followed in the LCTP.

Many of the developments in South Oxfordshire DC and Vale of White Horse DC are on a railway line so tram or train could be considered. The LCTP recognises that there may be situations where a new road should be built but after all other options have been considered and explored. Alternatives have not been explored. This application fails to provide reasonable alternatives as they have not been considered. Roads are not the only form of transport; light rail busses and active travel are all potential alternatives which have been rejected without consideration.

South Oxfordshire DC and Vale of White Horse DC adopted a climate action plan 2022-2024 which includes delivery of zero carbon developments via their joint local plan to encourage more sustainable choices. The joint Local Plan recognises the importance of protecting and maintaining the characteristics of the natural environment and biodiversity. The joint plan responds to the need to reduce carbon emissions by locating housing development close to jobs and services to reduce the need to travel by car and working with Oxfordshire County Council to build on our commitment to active travel. Recognising that transport emits the largest share of Oxfordshire's carbon emissions.

This planned road has been described as a road to nowhere, it starts as a major road and ends up on narrow rural roads unsuitable for heavy good vehicles. This will create a choke point at Golden balls roundabout causing congestion on roads off the roundabout and traffic will then ultimately use surrounding villages as rat runs to avoid the resulting congestion causing pollution. In addition, traffic from the A34 will use the planned road to try to avoid congestion adding to congestion on the new road.

No analysis has been carried out on how this road will affect surrounding areas such as Abingdon or roads leading off from the Golden Balls roundabout.

In February 2019 Oxfordshire County Council along with Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council declared a climate emergency acknowledging the need to act on the causes and impacts of climate change. All have declared their commitment to become carbon neutral.

We are constantly reminded of the effect of climate change, with a new month being recorded as the hottest on record, extreme temperatures abroad, devastating fires, floods and water shortages. We need to act on climate change now and if we make policies to tackle it, we need to stick to them. They should not just be there for when it convenient. This scheme is inconsistent with the councils' (Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council) policies and announcements on climate change and should not go ahead.

Serious damage will result to the greenbelt with destruction of more than 130 trees 27 copses, destruction of hedgerows and loss of habitat for badgers, bats etc. The mitigation measures put forward in the application have been highlighted as inadequate without sufficient information as pointed out by officers asked to comment on the plans. The case officers report on landscape and visual impacts states inevitable and significant harmful effects only reduced in the long term after 15 years but would remain significantly adverse in the main part. The harm this scheme will cause will manifestly outweigh any benefits.

Regarding the finances, this may not be a consideration regarding planning but as a taxpayer I am concerned at how the council meet the rising costs of this road. Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for the cost overrun. Current changes to inflation and interest rates mean it is likely that budgets will be raided to fund the overspend. Will this scheme mean increases in the County Council element of our council tax? People are struggling with high energy bills, high food bills and now increases in mortgage rates. Increased taxes to fund a road which will not solve the problems it is hailed as the solution for is not acceptable especially when we are in the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Finally, I am concerned about how this application has been dealt with by Oxfordshire County Council. A decision to refuse the application was made at a public meeting on 18 July 2023 for the 8 reasons below:-

- The Climate Change Committee Report has not been taken into account.
- Very special circumstance for breach of Green Belt not established.
- Impact on traffic on Abingdon & Didcot hasn't been assessed.
- Noise impact & especially on Appleford.
- Absence of a Heath Impact Assessment (HIA).
- Harm to the landscape.
- Poor design quality of Science Bridge (Didcot)
- Conflict with policy LTCP.

Oxfordshire County Council has since held a meeting on 27 September 2023 with the aim of reviewing their decision. This is after the Secretary of State called in the application. This action seems highly irregular and underhanded. As such I would ask if Oxfordshire County Council will be reviewing all decisions made by the planning committee without the applicant going down the normal appeal route.

This proposed road is not the answers it is not required to unlock housing development and it will not solve congestion, but it will damage the environment, contributing to climate change. It will have a detrimental impact to the health and quality of life of myself and fellow residents of Appleford and surrounding villages. It is not in accordance with the policies of Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White Horse District Council or South Oxfordshire District Council.

I therefore ask the Planning Inspector and the Secretary of State to adhere to the policies implemented by local and national Government to combating pollution and climate. I ask you to reject this plan and look to alternatives.

Yours sincerely

Miss Vicky Johnson

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