

## Eynsham Park & Ride and A40 Bus Lane Consultation

### OXFORD CIVIC SOCIETY Response to Oxfordshire County Council:-

We wish to make the following contribution to the consultation:

#### General points:

1. In responding to the consultation on the previous stage of the development of proposals for improvements to the A40 corridor we expressed our serious concerns regarding the circumstances of the consultation, and we continue to be concerned with the analysis of the problems which the proposals seek to address, as well as having some more detailed criticisms of the solutions suggested. We remain concerned that the current proposals for improvements to the A40 corridor have apparently been prepared as a piecemeal measure, in the absence of a strategic, deliverable plan for transportation in the Oxford city region, properly coordinated with the emerging development proposals of the five planning authorities. We understand that a county-wide transport infrastructure capacity plan is currently under development by the County Council on behalf of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, but the current consultation documents make no reference to this, nor to the implications of the relevant local development plans now in preparation by the planning authorities, despite a general reference to the likely housing and employment increases anticipated by 2031.
2. Likewise, in the previous consultation we commented on the need to consider the implications of the 'refreshed' Strategic Economic Plan for the county; although the consultation papers refer to the forecasts for around 100,000 new houses and 85,000 new jobs by 2031, the design proposals appear only to relate to data on traffic flows extracted from the 2011 census, and thus likely to be 10 years out of date by the time of implementation of the measures. It is difficult to have any confidence in the success of the proposals in achieving their objectives.
3. The consultation papers do not make it clear precisely what the funding position is for the proposed works; it is stated that Government funding will be sought for the A40 'longer term strategy', briefly outlined; this confirms that there is considerable uncertainty over funding and timescales for both the current proposals, and any more comprehensive measures, and this is compounded by the current uncertainties over potential re-organisation of local governance and devolution of responsibilities and funding allocations.
4. We have previously commented on the apparent absence of consideration of priorities as between investment in improvements on the A40 corridor, and alternative candidates for improvements; the potentially-greater claims for investment in the A34 corridor and in the Rapid Transit schemes already proposed are obvious examples. This consultation does not clarify the prioritisation of schemes.
5. We also previously criticised the lack of any serious attempt to define the nature and scale of the **long term** problem of the A40 corridor. Without this it is difficult to judge what effect the proposed measures might have on, inter alia, journey times, mode shift, employment patterns and productivity, or health, or what timescale might be applied to the 'longer term' strategy outlined. Indeed, it remains obscure precisely what the case is for investment in the short-term for the measures now proposed, in what circumstances there would be a case for

investment in more comprehensive improvements, and whether it is sound investment policy to embark upon the proposed short-term or interim measures at all.

6. Despite the inclusion of some data on population and commuting patterns, the current proposals have not been developed as an engineering solution to the current traffic situation or problems of congestion, or to the achievement of the stated objectives:
  - *To provide a congestion free route for public transport on the A40 eastbound approach to Oxford.*
  - *To encourage modal shift from private car to public transport.*
  - *To stimulate economic growth within Oxford, West Oxfordshire and the Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine.*

but rather as a series of measures which could be physically accommodated at minimum cost. There has been no analysis of just how effective the proposed measures are likely to be in addressing the stated objectives.

7. In addition, the stated objectives refer to modal shift, but, mystifyingly, omit to mention cycling, when encouragement of cycling is purported to be a key component of transport policy, with strong beneficial consequences for health, air quality, noise, and congestion. In making improvements to the A40 corridor, provision of the very best cycling environment should be a high priority. We specifically referred to the neglect of consideration of cycling in the previous consultation, and are very disappointed with the omission of cycling as a priority transport mode in the current proposals.
8. In this context, the expedient solution of reducing the provision of a cycle lane to one, on just the north side of the carriageway is flawed. For a significant behavioural shift to occur to the cycling mode, the very best facilities should be provided; since this is an important commuting route, for much of the year the greatest volume of traffic will occur during darkness; westbound cyclists will thus be facing oncoming vehicle headlights, separated only by a 1.5m wide grass strip. This is not only an unpleasant and intimidating situation, but potentially dangerous, especially as no street lighting is proposed and the cycle lane is to be shared with pedestrians. The economies of a single, two-way cycle lane are in any case diminished by its need to be 50% wider; this solution smacks of penny-pinching which will significantly discourage cycling.
9. It is not clear what surface will be provided to the cycle lane, using the proposed 'CellWeb construction. This is significant for the attractiveness of the cycling option, but also important for maintenance, weed growth and for the accessibility of below-ground services, and reinstatement following excavation.
10. We would support the application of a 50mph speed restriction on the A40 between Eynsham and Oxford. Whilst the justification provided is based on the availability of width between parapets of bridges, the measure would also bring benefits to the residential communities in terms of air pollution and noise, and safety at road junctions, whilst the extension of journey times over this sector (compared with a 60mph limit) would be in the order of ½ a minute. In reality, vehicle speed and hence journey times are likely to remain governed by flows at the terminal roundabouts rather than the speed limit of the road.
11. Since the current proposals represent an interim approach to improvement of the A40 corridor, the issue of compromise of future improvements, and potential increases in costs of such measures should be considered. Such consideration should include the number, width and location (if a single cycle lane were to be preferred) of the cycle lane. The current

proposals should be designed to enable the future proposals to be simply augmented later, without reconstruction of the works currently proposed; it is not apparent that such consideration has been given.

12. Problems of congestion to eastbound traffic on the A40 corridor are principally caused by the capacity of the Wolvercote and Cutteslowe roundabouts. No mention is made of the effects of the recently-completed improvements to these, which were projected to provide for an approximate 30% increase in capacity. The perceived benefits of the eastbound bus lane would be undermined if in practice bus passengers continued to queue in the section between Dukes Cut and the Wolvercote roundabout. A 'congestion-free route' all the way to the roundabout needs to be assured. This might be secured by linking the bus gate traffic signal to the queue length approaching the roundabout such that ordinary traffic is held back west of Dukes Cut. In time this situation might be alleviated by the possible A40-A44 (Loop Farm) link road which has been proposed, and which would divert eastbound traffic for the A34, Kidlington etc off the Wolvercote roundabout, However this proposal is not mentioned which leaves its status, potential relationship and impact on the current A40 scheme unaccounted for.
13. The plan showing current traffic congestion mapping ("Addressing westbound congestion") erroneously annotates the "extent of congestion – PM Peak" as terminating at the existing Eynsham roundabout; the mapping itself shows this congestion extending west of the roundabout, off the edge of the map. This westwards extension of congestion beyond the roundabout calls into question the likely efficacy of the proposed bus lane terminating at the roundabout. If buses are to be delayed by congestion west of the roundabout, there is either little point in provision of the short bus lane, or a case for extending the bus lane westwards beyond the roundabout.
14. Perhaps most significantly, the Government has recently confirmed approval to (and funding for) a 'Garden Village' proposed by West Oxford District Council at a site immediately north of Eynsham, introducing the possibility of 2,200 new homes in a key zone of influence for the A40 corridor. The consultation papers make no reference to this likely development, nor to its physical relationship with the proposed Eynsham P&R facility. Clearly, the new development will have major implication for traffic generation, routing of utilities (drainage, water supply, electricity, gas and communications services), access (for pedestrians, cyclists, private motor vehicles and public transport services), and junction design on the A40. Both the design and the investment case for implementation of the currently-proposed 'interim' measures for the A40 corridor improvement would be affected by this development, to which no consideration has been given.
15. Although the proposed P&R facility is shown as to be implemented in three phases, the capacity of each phase is not revealed, and neither is a projected timescale. No information is provided on the services which would be expected to operate in each phase, what use (hence modal shift) these are expected to achieve, and whether this shift represents a diversion from Peartree or other parking facility in Oxford or newly-won trips transferring to non-car modes into the city. No information is provided on the projected effects on traffic flows of the new P&R facility itself, or the proposed new dedicated roundabout providing access.
16. Given all the above factors, it is difficult to judge whether the current proposals represent a sensible, cost-effective investment in worthwhile measures to address the real problems

with transportation in this corridor, not just for the present, but for an easily-foreseeable future.

### **Specific observations on Design Proposals**

#### 17. Sheet 1

The proposals for cyclists crossing the access road to the new P&R are unacceptable, with no direct crossing and no adequate 'splitter' island to enable safe crossing. The same observation applies at the Cuckoo Lane junction.

The reference to pruning of hedgerows relates to the future maintenance of the route, and is, incidentally, applicable to cycle lanes in many locations.

There appears to be no provision for pedestrian or cycle access across the A40 between the P&R site, and the west end of Eynsham village; residents of a considerable part of the village would have to make an uncontrolled crossing, or detour several hundred metres eastwards to the proposed Pegasus crossing on Sheet 2.

#### 18. Sheet 2

The proposed Pegasus crossings have extremely limited space for waiting pedestrians, horses and bicycles. The easterly Pegasus crossing is positioned some 100m west of the proposed eastbound bus stop, for reasons unexplained; this risks pedestrians making uncontrolled crossings of the A40 in order to access the bus stop.

Although there is a bus gate immediately west of the Eynsham roundabout, there is no priority control for buses accessing the roundabout from the west; buses could thus face significant delays caused by traffic entering the roundabout from the south (Eynsham).

It is not clear how far east of the Eynsham roundabout the westbound bus lane would terminate. See comments above regarding the potential obstruction of buses by congestion west of the roundabout.

#### 19. Sheet 3

It is not clear why the westbound bus lane starts so far west of the junction at the Cassington road, rather than commencing immediately after the junction.

The pedestrian and cycle bridge proposed at Cassington New Bridge should maintain the path width of 3.00m; introducing obstructions on a new piece of infrastructure is not acceptable. The proposed width would only be acceptable if a separate cycle lane was provided for westbound cycle traffic.

The proposed reconfigured junction at Cassington makes very poor provision for cyclists, with a convoluted routeing and no central refuge.

#### 20. Sheet 4

Horsmere Lane should not be closed off from pedestrian and cycle traffic; this is not made clear on the design proposals.

#### 21. Sheet 7

The financial advantage of compromising the beneficial effects of the proposals by termination of the eastbound bus lane at Duke's Cut Bridge is not justified by any evidence relating to the stated objectives of the proposals. Not only would avoidance of carrying out the necessary bridge engineering works now jeopardise the success of the scheme, the implication is that further major disruption will be caused in due course when the 'longer term' strategy for a properly-connected rapid transit route is implemented.

#### 22. Journey time benefits

No information is provided on the period or lengths of time over which the projected time savings for bus passengers are expected to apply. Coupled with any improvements in the routes or frequencies of services some element of mode shift may be anticipated 'all the way' from Witney and Carterton and this too deserves to be identified as part of fulfilling the scheme's objectives and justifying its cost.

We would be obliged if you would take account of these observations in taking the proposals forward.

Yours sincerely,

**Peter Thompson**  
**Chairman, Oxford Civic Society**