

## **DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND THAMES CROSSING (HIF1).**

### **REVISED SUBMISSION BY EAST HENDRED PARISH COUNCIL, 6<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2023.**

It is prepared by Roger Turnbull, a Transport Planner, formerly at Halcrows, Consultant Engineers, and Barton Willmore, Planning Consultants, with experience of modelling the London Docklands DLR River Thames Crossing to Lewisham & Parish Councillor.

#### **East Hendred Parish Council OBJECTS to the HIF1 River Thames Crossing on these grounds:**

1. **The proposals refer to The Vale Local Plan Part 1 Policies.** But Policies CP33 & CP34 only support sustainable transport, promoting the use of public transport, cycling & walking. There are no Local Plan Proposals for a Thames Crossing outside the District.
2. **The Vale Local Plan Part 2 Infrastructure Delivery Plan** only identified the A4130 widening & Science Bridge. The latter proposals blight the redevelopment of Didcot Power Station for mixed uses including a potential Didcot Rail Freight Terminal, supported by the Network Rail & Highways England Report on East Midlands to Southampton.
3. **The South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policy TRANS 3** only safeguards land for a crossing. More detailed appraisals would be necessary to justify a scheme that had not been fully designed or costed. East-West movements were considered the key issue at Didcot, to justify the A4130 widening & Science Bridge only.
4. **Traffic growth within Oxford & Cambridge has been avoided** by traffic management over limited bridge crossings. Avoiding additional road capacity across the River Thames is the simplest way to restrict traffic growth between the A417 Reading Road through East Hendred & the A415 Abingdon Road. That approach would comply with the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP) objective to reduce traffic levels.
5. **The benefits of the road scheme are short-lived**, with the Goodwin Report showing that the Systra forecasts reduce peak average speeds below 2020 levels by 2034, whilst the 2015 costs have increased from £40m for a Thames crossing, £26m for Science Bridge & £14m for A4130 widening to c.£300m today.
6. **The Value for Money has thus reduced.**

## **7. A Comparison with Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections proposals.**

**7.1 In May 2023, The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)** reported on public consultation on its Making Connections proposals. They are based on City Deal funding for £1bn over 15 years to deliver 44,000 new jobs & 33,000 new homes. Its proposals will deliver:

- **Transforming the bus network** (with 5-10 mins frequencies) on new Greenway routes, extra services, cheaper fares & longer operating hours.
- **Investment in sustainable travel**, with new walk & cycle Greenway routes.
- **The creation of a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ)** by charging vehicles to fund improvements, but only after bus improvements are implemented, in 2025/28.

**7.2 The key findings** were that 78% of respondents supported cheaper, faster & more frequent bus services, 71% supported reducing carbon emissions, & 68% supported improved walking & cycling measures.

**7.3 By comparison, the Sept 2021 AECOM Options Report** rejected the following alternatives: Enhanced bus network & bus priority, Didcot Park & Ride, Improved rail services, Junction realignments & signalling, & Upgraded traffic signal control.

**7.4 Instead, Oxfordshire County Council preferred a £300m road scheme**, (based on an unfunded scheme costed at £79.5m in The Vale Local Plan Part 1 Delivery Plan, Table 5), to link relatively remote military bases at Harwell, & Culham, & enable housing growth for 15,000 homes, (Source: AECOM Didcot Housing Infrastructure Fund, page 8 paragraph 1.22).

**7.5 Why is no evidence provided on travel growth or modal share** between the Harwell & Culham employment sites? Why cannot a review of the Harwell Campus Travel Plan target a 25% reduction in car use? Existing car use is 86% of the modal share.

**7.6 Walking & Cycling.** Unlike the focus of the Cambridge proposals, the AECOM Report Appendix A on Walking & Cycling has no design or costed proposals, only User opportunities, contrary to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

**7.7 Advice in NPPF, in paragraphs 110-112**, encourages giving priority to sustainable transport modes such as pedestrians, cycling & high-quality public transport. For example, it explains why East-West Rail between Oxford & Cambridge is being progressed & why the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway is not.

## 8. AECOM Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund HIF1 Report, Sept 2021.

### 8.1 Baseline Conditions (page 25 of report) – 2011 Census Journey to Work Mode Share

	Didcot	Oxford	Oxfordshire
Walk	11%	19%	13%
Cycling	5%	18%	8%
Bus	4%	17%	8%
Train	7%	3%	3%
Car driver & passenger	72%	39%	66%

**8.2** An assessment of the Baseline Conditions should have identified the high mode share by car to Didcot, compared to Oxford & Oxfordshire, (& low share by foot, cycling & bus), as the key issue on which Local Transport Plan policies, proposals & funding, should be focused. Yet this key issue is not addressed. Culham has only an hourly bus & rail service to Didcot & the Clifton Hampden Route 95 has no off-peak buses.

**8.3 Multi-Mode Travel Growth Data** – nether the AECOM nor the SYSTRA reports assess a comparison of Cordon Surveys & modelled travel flows across the River Thames for the Base Year 2020, or for 2034 with & without the proposals.

**8.4** Without the publication of the assessment of traffic flows with & without the scheme, & their environmental effects, no decision can be made to progress the scheme due to the lack of robust evidence on alternative options, required by LTCP.

## 9 Professor Goodwin Report requested by the OCC Transport Scrutiny Working Party on the Systra Didcot Base Model Development Report, Appendix E, 2018.

**9.1** The Goodwin Report concludes that:

- **The Systra report showed short-lived benefits**, & only looked at the effect of traffic generated by new development, overlaid on the Oxford Strategic Model.
- **It relied on the 2015/18 Dept for Transport National Traffic Forecasts**, which does not represent current base levels of traffic in 2023, affected by Covid & increased homeworking. The new Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP) page 106 is based on a 'Decide & Provide' approach, by which road schemes will only be considered after all other options have been explored.
- **It largely ignores other factors**, e.g. District climate change targets, the review of Travel Plans, revised car parking standards, new cycling & walking design standards, the new 20 mph village speed limits, new traffic management & housing design policies, support for active travel, & induced travel.
- **Induced travel generated by road schemes** has a negative effect even with just a 10% increase in trips from the growth in housing.
- **Carbon emissions may differ** if traffic management policies reduce traffic speeds on safety grounds, when compared with reduced speeds from traffic congestion. The reduction in carbon emissions from higher speeds would then be overstated.
- **Oxfordshire is not alone** in inheriting major road schemes from a previously controlled authority. Wales has decided to pause them.