

Reference: R3.0010/24

County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND

Miss Lilly Ruddock
AECOM

Sent by email

Rachel Wileman
Director of Planning,
Environment and Climate
Change

5th June 2024

Dear Lilly,

Re: Planning application seeking full planning permission for:

The construction of two sections of single carriageway forming part of the Watlington Relief Road (WRR) including footways and cycleways, two new roundabouts, a new junction linking Britwell Road/Harmans Way and the provision of a vehicular pick-up and drop-off area to Icknield Community College, a new section of bridleway (Pyrton Lane to east and west of the route alignment), pedestrian crossing facilities, a new bridge over Chalgrove Brook, landscaping and planting, drainage improvements, street lighting and associated earthworks and infrastructure.

Fields to the northern and eastern outskirts of Watlington in Oxfordshire. The Proposed Development intersects five local roads: from east to west, these are the B4009, Rosemoor Drive, B480 (Cuxham Road), Pyrton Lane and Watlington Road (B4009)

Information required pursuant to section 62(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended

Further information required to support planning application and under Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

The consultation period on the above planning application has ended and we have received comments from a range of consultees. Copies of these are available to view on our website which I understand you have seen. To determine the application, further information and clarification is required in respect of both the planning application and the Environmental Statement submitted in support of the application. This includes further environmental which would fall under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (The 'EIA Regulations')

in order to fulfil the requirements of Regulation 26 (2) should planning permission be granted. This letter sets out the information and clarification which is required.

This letter should be read alongside the detailed responses received from statutory and non- statutory consultees and other interested parties who have made comments on the application, as this letter is not intended to repeat those in full. Many of the comments received have commented on and/or expressed concerns about the proposed development that may have implications for how it is assessed against development plan policies and other material considerations, and you should seek to take this opportunity to address them accordingly through amendments and the additional information to be submitted.

Further Information and clarification Required:

Further information and clarification is required in relation to:

- Landscape and visual impacts
- Arboriculture
- Biodiversity
- Drainage
- Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land
- Noise and Vibration
- Transport

The detail is set out below. Please also refer to the comments made by the consultees for more detail on the planning application website ([Watlington Relief Road R3.0010/24 Planning application web](#)) including providing the following:

Landscape and visual impacts

Please see consultation responses from OCC Landscape Officer (comments posted on website 12th April 2024) and Chilterns Conservation Board First comment (posted on website 2nd February 2024), second comment (posted on website 20th February 2024)

Design:

The design should be in line with South Oxfordshire District Council Design Guide and the Chilterns “Guidance for the Design and Management of Highways” with regards to junction 3.

- More details on level information (embankments, cuttings) need to be provided. The landscape drawings don’t indicate this.
- Junction 3 - clarification should be provided on why the proposed junction design is considered the most appropriate approach. Information should be provided of how the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) guidance documents have been considered in the design of the roundabout and lighting.

- An additional photomontage or wireframe image is also requested for viewpoint 11 (B4009).

Lighting:

Regarding lighting, clarification is sought on the technical details of the proposed lighting and its appearance in the landscape including relevant legal requirements and standards to be provided. It needs to be presented so that all can understand the details including that “before and after” LUX plans should be provided: LUX plans should be provided for the site as existing and proposed to help understand any increased lighting in the landscape and the impact on dark skies including those of the CNL.

Further information is required regarding the hours of lighting, dimming, use of timers etc to assist reduced lighting including near the Icknield Community College and in the setting of the CNL and designated historic assets including the Pyrton and Shirburn conservation areas and Shirburn Castle Listed Parks and Gardens.

Vegetation loss:

Consideration should be given whether more planting can be introduced along the boundary with the CNL.

Landscape and Visual Impact:

Clarification is required on the proposed image of viewpoint 10 as it is unclear whether this is accurate and seems to suggest that most of the existing vegetation in site PYR 1 is retained although it is indicated to be removed on the Tree Protection Plan (sheet 7).

Landscape proposals:

Information on the treatment of swales should also be provided.

Existing mature trees along the boundary with the Shirburn Castle Historic Parks and Gardens are being retained, which is welcomed. However, little additional structural planting is proposed in this location and consideration should be given whether the planting could be enhanced in this location to provide better mitigation towards the Shirburn Castle Historic Parks & Gardens.

The landscape masterplan drawings show mesh fencing near the Icknield Community College site on both sides of the road. It is understood that this fencing might be approximately two metres high, which will have an urbanising effect on the road and adjacent areas. Consideration should be given to how the impact of this could be mitigated e.g. by replacing it with soft landscape treatment or by effective screening of the fencing e.g. by using climbing plants.

Please note comments regarding the extensive use of birch near junction 3 in the landscape officer’s letter as well as considering the longevity, size of species and their contribution to the landscape.

Arboriculture

Please see consultation response from OCC Tree Officer (comments posted on website 26th March 2024) and Forestry Officer at South Oxfordshire District Council (comments posted on website 1st March 2024)

:

With reference to the Arboricultural Impact Assessment found at Appendix 13-5 of the Environment Statement Ref WRR-ACM-02-ZZZ-RP-J-2600339-A1-P01 dated December 2023, the following parts of the proposal require further consideration and amendments:

- The proposed attenuation tanks within the root protection areas (RPA) of G115 should be redesigned to avoid the RPAs of these trees.
- The proposed cellular underground storage tank within the RPAs of trees T64 and T67 should be redesigned to avoid the RPAs.
- The proposed path and raised planters should also be redesigned to avoid the RPAs of trees T64 and T67. A large section of hedge H61 is shown to be removed on the Tree Protection Plan, but it is not clear why sections of this hedge not impacted by the works (between T62 and T68) cannot be retained. Please provide clarification on this matter.
- The planting schedule should be amended to allow for a greater diversity of species.

Biodiversity

Please see consultation responses from OCC Biodiversity Officer (comments posted on website 15th March 2024), the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) First comment (posted on website 14th March 2024), second comment posted on website 24th April 2024) and comments from Richard Buxton Solicitors acting on behalf of Shirburn Parish Council (posted on website on 11th April and 7th May 2024):

Surveys:

The ecological surveys date back to 2021. It is noted that the survey report for badgers (dated October 2022) is indicated to have a 'shelf life' of 12 months. The Guidance on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys, published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) advises that for surveys 18 months to 3 years old a professional ecologist will need to issue a clear statement, with appropriate justification, on the validity of the report. This should include which, if any, of the surveys need to be updated and the appropriate scope, timing, and methods for the update survey(s). This should be based on a site visit and may involve updating desk study information. This information is therefore required.

With reference to ES Vol 1 Chapter 10: Biodiversity, please provide further information on the measures that would avoid, mitigate, or compensate for the adverse effects resulting from the development on priority species (bats and birds). If it is not possible to mitigate or compensate these impacts on site, then it might be necessary to provide off site compensation

Paragraph 6.10.5 of the Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) refers to additional measures to meet the requirements of the European Protected Special Mitigation Licence in relation to bats. Please can information be provided on these additional measures and what they will entail.

Reference is made to an existing reptile mitigation strategy in place for a development by Bloor Homes, indicating that reptiles will be absent from the footprint of the road proposal due to use of reptile/amphibian fencing. Further information is required to confirm this, in particular the timings of the existing reptile mitigation strategy including whether the fencing is currently in place, whether it is being actively maintained, how long for, and when it is planned to be removed.

Please could you confirm whether the recommendation for Water Framework Directive (WFD) compliance assessment (as noted in the aquatic survey) has been completed.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

Please could the Biodiversity Metric spreadsheet be provided as it is missing from the Appendix H of the report.

It is noted that the trading rules are not met for Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland generating a requirement for offsite enhancement of 0.38 ha of this habitat from 'Moderate' to 'Good' condition, within the Local Planning Authority boundary. Some elements of the metric should be reviewed (please see OCC Officer Biodiversity comments dated 15th March 2024 on the planning application website for details).

Please provide information on the requirement for the provision for 0.42 Biodiversity Units of lowland mixed deciduous woodland offsite including location, baseline and post enhancement / creation metric calculations, outline proposals and in-principal agreement with the landowner.

Full long term management details for 30 years management of areas contributing to Biodiversity Net Gain will need to be submitted either with the application or secured through conditions/obligations. Outline management information should be provided to justify the condition assigned to post-development habitats to demonstrate how the proposed condition is achievable.

At paragraph 3.1.2 of the Environmental Statement Volume III Appendix 10-14: Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment - Part 1 of 2, two areas of other neutral grassland are identified (terrestrial and riparian) and both are assigned a condition score of poor. However, Appendix D Condition Assessment Rationale refers to two areas of other neutral grassland assigned a condition score of good. Please could clarification be provided relating to the condition scoring of the other neutral grassland and more detailed information provided, including types and numbers of species, to justify the condition scoring which has been assigned.

The aspiration to create other neutral grassland with a condition score of moderate within 5 years is noted. However, more justification is needed as to how this will be achieved next to a road where nutrients will build up from the nitrates in exhaust fumes. Please could you provide more detail in relation to the management techniques to be put in place, for example, the removal of arisings from roadside mowing in order to avoid a build-up of nutrients.

Further explanation of the urban trees scoring to deliver 7.11 units is required.

The Habitat Creation tab shows a total of 55 Medium trees are proposed to be planted. Please clarify if this is implying that 55 newly planted trees are being scored as Medium size. Please see BBOWT's comments on page 2 of their letter dated 23rd April 2024. The sizing may need amending or justifying how "medium" size can be achieved or whether it is meant to be "small" sized with consequent effects on the number of units.

Drainage

Please see Consultation responses from Environment Agency (EA) (comments posted 22nd March 2024) and from OCC Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) (comments posted on website 8th March 2024 and 27th March 2024)

The Environment Agency has objected to the application and this is supported by the LLFA. More information is required including the following:

Fluvial Flood Risk

The EA states "The applicant has proposed flood storage compensation to mitigate for the flood storage due to be lost. We are satisfied it has been demonstrated that the compensation is level for level in terms of volume, as demonstrated in Table 6-2 of the Hydraulic Modelling Report (dated December 2023 and prepared by Aecom) in Volume III Appendix 11-2 of the Environment Statement. However, level for level compensation has only been provided up to the 1% AP plus a 31% (central) allowance for climate. In addition, it is not clear whether the level for level compensation scheme is hydraulically connected for each slice. They have not located plans that show how water could flow into and out of the compensation areas. Whilst we welcome that a topographical survey has been provided in 'Part 2' of the Flood Risk Assessment, we unfortunately cannot zoom in far enough to read this plan."

Please can you provide a clear version of this plan alongside evidence that the compensation scheme is hydraulically connected. More detail is required on how water would flow into and out of the compensation area separated from the river and wider floodplain by a culvert.

The EA states that the modelling shows that the raised road would impede a flow route across the development site (Site 2) in the 0.1% AP flood event. The provision of an additional culvert under the raised road should be explored to help mitigate for impacts of the proposed development in this extreme event.

The figures of the compensation scheme included in the flood modelling (the outputs of this modelling, showing changes in flood levels across the site as a result of the proposed works, can be seen in Figures 6-2 (without compensation) and 6-6 (with compensation) of the Hydraulic Model Report). should be replicated with the change in flood risk due to the proposed development over a range of flood events, including the 1% AP plus 43% CC allowance event.

Please could you confirm the details the EA requests in the following paragraph:
"Comparing Fig 6-2 with 6-6, the compensation scheme has limited impact on the

increases in flood risk as a result of the development. It appears that the greatest increases in flood risk are upstream on the site (in the east of the site) and are affected by the proposed compensation. A third floodplain storage area, in the east of the site, upstream of the proposed bridge and raised new road, should be investigated. Further, both Figures show increased flood risk to the B480 near the existing Cuxham Roundabout. This is summarised in the Hydraulic Model report, which states that flood levels on the new section of the B480 are predicted to increase by up to 250mm due to lowering road levels in this location. The FRA proposes that this road should be closed in times of flood. As the proposed development is shown to increase flood risk to an existing road (essential infrastructure) it is considered to fail the exception test. The applicant should confirm the height of the proposed new road in mAOD. Whilst the height of the proposed bridge and both roundabouts are mentioned in the FRA, it is not clear what height the rest of the road would be set at. Whilst we expect this is proposed to be above the design flood level to protect future users, this should be clearly stated in the FRA.”

Therefore, a revised Flood Risk Assessment which addresses the points above is required. This will need to demonstrate that any loss of floodplain storage within the 1% AP plus a 43% allowance for climate change can be directly compensated for to prevent an increase in flood risk elsewhere and also demonstrate that the proposal will be safe for users in times of flood.

Clarification should be provided on the information supplied in Figure 6-6. This appears to show that flood volumes are lost under the proposed bridge, contrary to the plans provided that show flood extents remain in bank here.

There is also no flood risk shown in the flood relief culvert. Please confirm whether this is just a visual mapping issue or an issue in how the proposed scenario has been created.

Impacts on groundwater:

The EA has stated that the ES contains insufficient monitoring of groundwater levels during wetter periods and assumptions made in relation to slightly higher peak winter levels are likely to underestimate the potential effects to water quality from the road drainage.

Based on insufficient monitoring, there are concerns that the proposed surface water drainage design will not be effective in preventing pollution of ground and surface waters during periods where groundwater levels would be expected to be higher than currently considered. This is particularly relevant for, but not limited to, features which will discharge directly to the Chalgrove Brook main river. Groundwater flooding may also be a concern at this site under peak periods, likely to render infiltration features ineffective.

A satisfactory risk assessment is required that demonstrates that the risks to groundwater posed by the proposed development can be satisfactorily managed.

The LLFA supports the objection from the Environment Agency and agrees that their reasons for objection need to be addressed. They also state that the submitted drainage scheme needs to be made to address the objections made by the EA and that the drainage strategy needs to meet the requirements of the LLFA as well as the EA as detailed in their objection and include for the Local and National standards in respect of

the four pillars of SuDS specifically water quality and quantity.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Please see comments from Richard Buxton Solicitors acting on behalf of Shirburn Parish Council (posted on website on 11th April and 7th May 2024)

As well as the permanent loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, please provide information about the total loss of land used for food production to the proposed development.

Noise and vibration:

Please see comments from OCC Public Health(posted on website on 29th February 2024) and Richard Buxton Solicitors acting on behalf of Shirburn Parish Council (posted on website on 11th April and 7th May 2024)

Chapter 6 of the ES, the Health Impact Assessment and the Non-Technical Summary asserted that the future impacts of the development on occupants of the new housing have been assessed and taken into consideration. Further information is required with regard to this assessment and the locations of future residential Noise Sensitive Receptors assessed.

Please provide information on the assessment of noise and vibration impacts on occupiers of site D (South Oxfordshire District Council planning application no. P16/S2576/O).

Please provide information on whether there are other mitigations possible to reduce the negative noise impacts on the residential property on Pyrton Lane which is sited 50 metres north of the proposed development.

Transport

Please see consultation response from OCC Highway DC team (comments posted 10th May 2024) and from Richard Buxton Solicitors acting on behalf of Shirburn Parish Council (posted on website on 11th April and 7th May 2024) and Cuxham Parish Council (comments posted on website 29th February 2024)

The Local Model Validation Report (reference WRR-A C M-03-Z ZZ-RP-N-2600003-S3-PO1) (LMVR) referenced in chapter 8.5 of the Transport Assessment has not been included in the planning application or Environmental Statement. Similarly the Traffic Forecasting Report (TFR) (reference WRR-ACM-03-ZZZ-RP-N-2600004-S3-P01) referenced in chapter 8.7 of the Transport Assessment has not been included in the planning application or Environmental Statement. Please refer to the consultation response of the OCC Highways team and the annexes to the letters from Richard Buxton Solicitors for more detail. This information is required to be provided.

Induced and diverted trips have not been included in the modelling carried out. Induced trips are new trips that would not have been made without the proposed infrastructure, typically arising from suppressed demand. Diverted trips are those trips that would reroute through the model area due to the improved route. Details on induced and diverted trips need to be added to the VISSIM model and are required to be provided.

Please confirm that all relevant housing commitments have been taken into account in the assessments made.

Other comments made by consultees and next steps:

It is recommended that you carefully consider the comments which have been made by consultees and those commenting on the application including suggestions for improvements to the proposals e.g. Oxfordshire Roads Action Alliance, Active Travel England, Public Health, Rights of Way, Watlington Parish Council (particularly in terms of air quality diffusion tubes and a provision of a crossing on Oxfordshire Way), Pyrton Parish Council (removal of lighting from roundabout on B4009) and the Vale of White Horse District Council planning and the Vale of White Horse District Council Drainage team. You are encouraged to make amendments to the proposals to address any concerns that have been raised including those made by CPRE regarding the crossing and to remove current objections from various consultees. Please submit the results of the archaeological field evaluation (trial trenching) prior to the determination of the planning application as requested by OCC archaeologist. These can be submitted alongside the further information requested above. If you are amending plans, please state clearly in a covering letter which previously submitted plans have been superseded.

The consultation responses received include requests for some further details to be requested by condition. If you are able to provide further information at this stage to address the details that consultees have confirmed they would require, this could avoid the need for some of the proposed pre-commencement planning conditions, should planning permission be granted for this development. Therefore, you are encouraged to submit as much information as you can at this stage, as this could avoid delays at a later stage.

Following submission of this further information and any amendments to the application, we will hold a further 30 days period of advertisement and consultation. There would be a lead in period to get a report finalised and the item on the agenda for a Planning and Regulation Committee. Forthcoming Planning and Regulation committee dates are:

2nd September 2024
14th October 2024

25th November 2024

I hope this is helpful, but please let me know if you require any clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Herriman

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