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thriving countryside for everyone to
value and enjoy

**'Didcot and Surrounding Area Infrastructure Improvements Update'
Consultation April 2020**

**Combined response from CPRE South Oxfordshire and CPRE Vale of White Horse
Districts**

***The focus on new roads is misguided - the priorities should be reducing the need to travel,
followed by public transport & active travel***

This consultation must be considered in light of our Climate Emergency, the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the recent Department of Transport Strategy¹ and associated comments by the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

'Public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will use our cars less and be able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network.'

It is therefore surprising, and short-sighted, that this consultation focuses wholly on road improvements and considers no options for improvement of rail and bus improvements nor the needed radical quantum shift in settlement, working and connectivity patterns.

We note that the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan from 2017 describes in detail the Didcot to Culham route as a 'Garden Line', restricted entirely to pedestrians, cyclists and autonomous vehicles. It is therefore shocking to see, three years later, proposals for a major new road system dominated by road freight and cars. Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan was a major and expensive development which was subject to extensive consultation and supported by Central Government. *What justification is there for this to be abandoned?*

CPRE RECOMMENDATION 1: Re-prioritise investment in Didcot infrastructure to focus on reducing the need to travel, public transport and active travel.

CPRE RECOMMENDATION 2: Re-assess the proposed investment in line with the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan.

¹ Decarbonising Transport Setting the Challenge, Dept of Transport March 2020.

Cycleways and footpaths - an opportunity to enhance the network that shouldn't be missed

CPRE is pleased to see cycleways on most of the new roads. However, greater priority should be given to pedestrian and cycle ways. For example, pedestrian and cyclists are forced to take a long way around roundabouts, across crossings etc. whereas motorists can sail straight through - these priorities need to change.

We urge that more attention is given to how these paths fit into the existing footpath and cycle path networks right across the area and the opportunity to enhance this network substantially. Providing footpaths parallel to the new roads must not in itself be seen as sufficient and plans are needed to ensure high quality pedestrian access from the residential areas of Great Western Park and Valley Park, the employment areas (e.g. Milton Park) and all other Didcot shops and services.

Cycleways and footpaths should be separated as much as possible from the roads, and where running parallel there should be extensive screening with hedges and trees to help protect cyclists and pedestrians from vehicle pollution.

The new roads cross a number of public rights of way, for example, Harwell BR1, Appleford BR3, RB4 and the footpaths crossing the proposed Clifton Hampton bypass. While some of these public rights of way are currently blocked or 'difficult' this should be an opportunity to revitalise and enhance access.

CPRE RECOMMENDATION 3: A comprehensive survey of footpaths across the area is required to maximise opportunities to enhance the network and ensure walkers, and other users, such as horse riders, can cross these roads safely.

What evidence exists that these schemes will reduce pressure on the A34?

CPRE disputes the assertion that these schemes will reduce pressure on the A34 (SV 2.16). The road from Didcot to Culham appears likely to increase traffic through Abingdon, across Abingdon Bridge and through the, already congested, Abingdon Town Centre or funnel traffic through Sutton Courtney. The Clifton Hampton Bypass will dump traffic onto the A4074 at the 'Golden Balls' roundabout, thus increasing congestion through Nuneham Courtenay and beyond to Oxford. There is also the danger that this development will produce a rat run on the B4015 through Chiselhampton and Stadhampton to the M40.

CPRE RECOMMENDATION 4: Traffic modelling is needed to demonstrate that relieving pressure points in the Didcot area is not offset by increased traffic and congestion in other area in and around Oxford.

A new town in the Green Belt at Culham is inappropriate and unnecessary

Whilst there may be limited scope for small-scale development on brownfield land at Culham Science Centre, CPRE entirely rejects the need to develop a significant new settlement at this location. The population and household projects published by the Office for National Statistics project a much smaller population growth for South Oxfordshire (and Oxfordshire as a whole) than are inferred by either the South Oxfordshire and Vale Local Plans or the Oxfordshire Growth Deal. CPRE believes that this housing will either not be built or encourage further commuter traffic into London and does not justify the destruction of the Oxford Green Belt nor the associated damage to the environment between Didcot and Culham.

CPRE RECOMMENDATION 5: Any consideration of a significant new settlement at Culham should be removed and the infrastructure proposals revised accordingly.

DETAIL

Scheme A: A4130 Widening

Much more attention needs to be paid to the pedestrian and cycle ways. It is not pleasant (or encouraging) for a cyclist or pedestrian to be in close proximity to heavy goods vehicles (as shown on the cross section). The junctions and roundabout plans need to give much more priority to cyclists over cars and goods vehicles. The cycleways (and pedestrian paths) need to connect up - they seem to peter out at the eastern end and on a wider scale they need to connect into a coherent network of footpaths and cycleways. Shared footpaths and cycleways should be avoided.

Any footpath running beside the A4130 should not be seen as the main route for pedestrians to move between Valley Park and GWP and Milton Park. These developments must provide appropriate pedestrian routes without the need to walk beside a dual carriageway.

It is also concerning to see the podway as an add-on. This should be replacing, and taking priority over, conventional road traffic.

Scheme B: Science Bridge

The route north of the Science Bridge to the existing Didcot ring road risks becoming a barrier between any development north and south of it. Review is needed to make sure pedestrians and cyclist can move freely across (or under) the road. At the moment, there does not seem to be any way to cross the road.

Scheme C: Didcot to Culham River Crossing

There appear to be no bus stop locations - these need to be close to the Appleford and Sutton Courtenay junctions.

The provision for autonomous vehicles has been lost completely - despite that fact it was a major component of the Didcot Garden Town plans.

The proposals for the Science Bridge should also consider providing a safe horse/cycle/footway route to link users of Harwell BR1 to Didcot BR27/Sutton Courtenay BR24.

Scheme D: Clifton Hampden Bypass

We assume the lack of cycleways shown on the map is an oversight. Again, we would like to see more bus stop locations - for example to the north of Clifton Hampden. A number of footpaths cross the proposed route (and the B4015 to the Golden Balls roundabout). The traffic density on this road is likely to be high and the plan needs to ensure this road can be crossed by pedestrians and horse riders etc. (We note that there will already be increased pressure on the Golden Balls roundabout and the A415 if the proposed 1,700 homes are built in Berinsfield.)