Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Our ref: APP/U3100/V/23/3326625
Your ref: R3.0138/21

Mr Jonathan Hill
AECOM
Aldgate Tower
2 Leman Street
London E1 8FA

11 December 2024

Dear Sir

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77
APPLICATION MADE BY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
LAND BETWEEN A34 MILTON INTERCHANGE, AND B4015 NORTH OF CLIFTON HAMPDEN, OXFORDSHIRE APPLICATION REF: R3.0138/21

This decision was made by Matthew Pennycook MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning, on behalf of the Secretary of State

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State to say that consideration has been given to the report of Lesley Coffey BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI, who held a public local inquiry[1] which opened on 20 February 2024 and sat for 21 days until 9 May 2024 into your client's application for planning permission for:

   - the dualling of the A4130 carriageway (A4130 Widening) from the Milton Gate Junction eastwards, including the construction of three roundabouts;

   - a road bridge over the Great Western Mainline (Didcot Science Bridge) and realignment of the A4130 north east of the proposed road bridge including the relocation of a lagoon;

   - construction of a new road between Didcot and Culham (Didcot to Culham River Crossing) including the construction of three roundabouts, a road bridge over the Appleford railway sidings and road bridge over the River Thames;

   - construction of a new road between the B4015 and A415 (Clifton Hampden bypass), including the provision of one roundabout and associated junctions; and

   - controlled crossings, footways and cycleways, landscaping, lighting, noise barriers and sustainable drainage systems,

[1] As set out in IR1.1, the inquiry was conjoined with the Side Roads Order, Bridge Order and Compulsory Purchase Order Inquiry. Those matters are the subject of a separate Department for Transport decision.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Email: PCC@communities.gov.uk
Laura Webster, Decision Officer
Planning Casework Unit
3rd Floor Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

in accordance with application Ref. R3.0138/21, dated 4 October 2021.

2. On 25 July 2023, the Secretary of State directed, in pursuance of Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, that your client's application be referred to her instead of being dealt with by the local planning authority (LPA), Oxfordshire County Council.

Inspector's recommendation and summary of the decision

3. The Inspector recommended that the application be permitted and planning permission granted subject to conditions.

4. For the reasons given below, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's conclusions, and agrees with her recommendation. She has decided to permit the application and grant planning permission. The Inspector's Report (IR) is attached. All references to paragraph numbers, unless otherwise stated, are to that report.

Environmental Statement

5. In reaching this position, the Secretary of State has taken into account the Environmental Statement (ES) which was submitted under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, and the environmental information submitted before the inquiry opened. Having taken account of the Inspector's comments at IR1.7-1.11, IR1.13, IR17.122-17.123 and IR17.351-17.360, the Secretary of State is satisfied that the ES and other additional information provided, as referred to at IR1.8 and IR17.351, complies with the above Regulations and that sufficient information has been provided for her to assess the environmental impact of the proposal.

Matters arising since the close of the inquiry

6. A list of representations which have been received since the close of the inquiry is at Annex A. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the issues raised do not affect her decision, and no other new issues were raised in this correspondence to warrant further investigation or necessitate additional referrals back to parties. Copies of these letters may be obtained on request to the email address at the foot of the first page of this letter.

7. On 30 July 2024, the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) 'Building the Homes we Need' (UIN HCWS48) was published. On that same date, the government launched a consultation to reform the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Secretary of State does not consider that publication of the WMS and the consultation on the existing Framework raise any matters that would require her to refer back to the parties for further representations prior to reaching her decision on this appeal, and she is satisfied that no interests have thereby been prejudiced.

Policy and statutory considerations

8. In reaching her decision, the Secretary of State has had regard to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004 which requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

9. In this case the development plans consist of:

   - the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP) adopted December 2020 and the Culham Neighbourhood Plan March 2023;

- the Vale of White Horse (VWH) Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (LPP1) adopted December 2016, the VWH Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (LPP2) adopted October 2019; and the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan April 2024;

- the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (OMWCS), adopted September 2017 and the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Saved Policies), adopted July 1996.

10. The Secretary of State considers that relevant development plan policies include those set out at IR4.2-4.23, and also include Policy SC17: Traffic management of the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan. This Neighbourhood Plan had passed referendum stage during the Inquiry and is now in force as part of the statutory development plan within the Vale of White Horse.

11. Other material considerations which the Secretary of State has taken into account include the Framework and associated planning guidance (the Guidance), as well as the documents set out at IR4.29-4.39.

12. The Secretary of State has also taken into account the statutory provisions set out at IR4.40-4.41 and IR4.43. In accordance with section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (LBCA)1990, she has paid special regard to the desirability of preserving those listed buildings potentially affected by the proposals, or their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they may possess. The Secretary of State notes that no part of the site falls within a conservation area, and therefore considers that section 72(1) of the LBCA Act 1990 (as referred to at IR4.42) does not apply.

Emerging plan

13. The emerging plan comprises the Emerging South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan (JLP). The Secretary of State considers that the emerging policies of most relevance to this case include proposed Policy IN3 which safeguards land for the proposed roads and bridges and safeguards all four components of the Scheme[2], as set out by the Inspector at IR4.24. The Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on Monday 9 December 2024 for independent examination.

14. Paragraph 48 of the Framework states that decision makers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to: (1) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan; (2) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies in the emerging plan; and (3) the degree of consistency of relevant policies to the policies in the Framework. For the reasons given by the Inspector at IR4.24, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that the JLP carries very limited weight.

Main issues

Need for and highway benefits of the Scheme

15. For the reasons given at IR17.5-17.21, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector at IR17.7 that the housing and employment growth within the development plans for the area (SOLP, VWH LPP1 And VWH LLP2) depend on the Scheme, and that the Local Plans expressly support all four components of the Scheme and safeguard land for them.

[2] Reference to 'the Scheme' and ‘HIF1’ means all four strategic highway infrastructure components as listed in the description of development. ‘HIF1’ and ‘the Scheme’ both refer to the application proposal.

She further agrees with the Inspector's conclusions at IR17.21 that there is substantial policy support for the Scheme in the Local Plans for the area, and that it is an integral component for growth within the Science Vale.

16. For the reasons given at IR17.340-17.346 and IR17.366, the Secretary of State also agrees with the Inspector that the delivery of the necessary infrastructure to unlock the high level of planned housing growth in the Science Vale is the most significant benefit of the HIF1 Scheme (IR17.340) and there would be a significant benefit towards meeting the existing unmet need for affordable housing (IR17.341). She further agrees with the Inspector at IR17.346 that the Scheme is essential to the future economic growth across the Science Vale, including at the three science campuses, and is fully consistent with Government policies for building a strong competitive economy.

17. For these reasons, the Secretary of State agrees at IR17.366 that there is a risk to future housing and employment delivery should the Scheme not go ahead. She considers that the benefit of facilitating the delivery of housing, including affordable housing, carries significant weight. She further considers that the local and national economic benefits of facilitating growth, including from the clusters of knowledge and data-driven, and high technology industries within the Science Vale including investment in key sectors (IR17.366) carry significant weight. She agrees with the Inspector at IR17.54 that there is a clearly identified need for the Scheme.

Other highway issues addressed by the Scheme

Network performance

18. For the reasons given at IR17.23-17.35, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that HIF1 would provide more capacity and thus relieve the existing congestion as well as provide capacity for future planned growth (IR17.33). She further agrees that the Scheme would provide an important additional river crossing which would help address the issue of severance between Didcot and the Culham Science Centre (CSC), and that the Science Bridge will help to address severance caused by the railway line (IR17.33). She agrees at IR17.34 that it is evident from the traffic modelling that in the absence of the Scheme the network would be at gridlock by 2034. The Secretary of State agrees at IR17.35 that there was no substantive or technical evidence to indicate that the Scheme would have a severe impact on the highway network and therefore there is no conflict with paragraph 115 of the Framework.

Active travel

19. For the reasons set out at IR17.36-17.46 and IR17.108-17.109, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that whilst the Scheme would not address all active travel journeys within the Science Vale, it forms part of a wider overall strategy and would enable connectivity to existing and planned footpaths, bridleways and cycle networks and forms an integral part of the Didcot Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2023) (LCWIP) (IR17.46). She agrees that the scheme would provide approximately 20km of new and/or improved off-carriageway and high-quality cycling and pedestrian infrastructure and a direct route between Milton Park and the CSC, and would provide a spine that would allow for links from planned housing and employment development (IR17.109). She further agrees that the rural routes suggested by objectors are not a realistic alternative to HIF1 (IR17.109). The Secretary of State agrees that overall, the

Scheme would deliver significant benefits in terms of connectivity for active travel as well as providing high quality, safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists (IR17.46).

Public transport

20. The Secretary of State notes the existing issues with public transport provision as set out by the Inspector at IR17.47-17.49, and notes that the evidence would suggest that bus service improvements are not deliverable in the absence of the Scheme (IR17.49).

21. For the reasons set out at IR17.47-17.52, the Secretary of State agrees that through the provision of additional highway capacity, including the Thames crossing, the Scheme will improve journey time reliability and allow the incorporation of bus priority measures (IR17.50), and would also facilitate the delivery of new bus routes (IR17.51).

Network resilience and safety

22. The Secretary of State notes that the existing historic bridges at Culham and Clifton Hampden are located within flood zone 3 and often need to close. She agrees that by providing an additional river crossing, the HIF1 Scheme will help to improve the resilience of the local transport network (IR17.53).

23. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that there would be benefits in respect of the historic bridges where traffic flows would be greatly reduced, thereby reducing potential damage to their physical fabric and facilitating the prioritisation of active travel and/or public transport on those bridges (IR17.349).

24. Overall, the Secretary of State gives the benefits to the highway network performance and resilience substantial weight. The weight attaching to active travel and public transport are addressed at paragraph 26-27 below.

Transport modelling

25. For the reasons set out at IR17.55-17.96, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that the traffic modelling is robust (IR17.96). She notes that it follows a methodology and scope agreed with the LPA and has been independently reviewed on behalf of the LPA as well as the Local Highway Authority (IR17.95).

Sustainable travel

26. For the reasons set out in paragraphs 19-21 above, and at IR17.97-17.112, the Secretary of State agrees that the Scheme would incentivise modal shift due to the improved and safer walking and cycling networks, as well as the provision for bus services and by the location of housing and employment sites to minimise travel (IR17.106), and that the proposed walking and cycling infrastructure would represent a substantial improvement by comparison with that which exists at present (IR17.106).

27. Overall, the Secretary of State agrees that the sustainable transport benefits of the Scheme are considerable, both in terms of the infrastructure it would provide and the benefits directly flowing from this, as well as its role in facilitating other schemes within the Local Transport Connectivity Plan, in which respect HIF1 would encourage and

facilitate modal shift (IR17.112). She gives significant weight to these sustainable transport benefits.

Consideration of alternatives

28. For the reasons set out at IR17.113-17.133, the Secretary of State agrees that the applicant's assessment of alternatives, including non-road options, was extensive and thorough and adequate reasons for the selection of the preferred route have been provided (IR17.133). She considers that the consideration of alternatives is sufficient to meet the requirements of the EIA Regulations and agrees that there is no compelling evidence to justify a fresh round of optioneering (IR17.133).

Climate change and carbon emissions

29. For the reasons given at IR17.134-17.164, the Secretary of State agrees that during construction the Scheme would make a minor contribution to carbon emissions but would have a negligible impact on the Government's overall carbon budget for that period, and that during operation there would be a minor beneficial effect on emissions. She further agrees that the Scheme would comply with the Framework and SOLP Policy DES 8 in terms of climate change, and that climate change considerations do not indicate that less weight should be afforded to the adopted development plans or that the housing requirements within them should be reduced (IR17.164).

Noise

30. For the reasons set out at IR17.165-17.198 and IR17.348, the Secretary of State agrees that the noise impacts have been properly assessed in accordance with the relevant guidance, and the traffic modelling on which the assessments rely are robust (IR17.197). She agrees that the impact of the Scheme would be beneficial for most properties (IR17.197) but although the Scheme would be compliant with paragraph 191 of the Framework in that it would mitigate and reduce to a minimum the potential adverse impacts resulting from noise, there would be some adverse impacts as a consequence of the Scheme (IR17.198). The Secretary of State agrees at IR17.198 that in this regard the Scheme would fail to comply with VWH LPP 2 Policy 23, but would comply with Policy 25 and Policy CP33 as a consequence of the mitigation proposed.

31. Overall the Secretary of State agrees that whilst some properties would experience an adverse effect due to noise, the Scheme as a whole would have a positive effect on noise in that it would take traffic away from residential receptors and significantly reduce the numbers of properties exposed to higher levels of traffic noise. She agrees that the Scheme is acceptable in terms of its impact on noise (IR17.198).

Air quality

32. For the reasons set out at IR17.199-17.218 and IR17.348, the Secretary of State agrees that during construction the Scheme would incorporate best practice in the design, construction and operation of the development to minimise air pollution, and notes that these measures would be secured by the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (IR17.218). She agrees with the Inspector at IR17.216 that both the traffic and the air quality modelling are sound. She also agrees that the Scheme would also help to improve air quality in accordance with the Framework through the provision of an active travel network and improvements to sustainable transport. Overall, the Secretary of State

agrees that the proposal would be acceptable in terms of its effect on air quality (IR17.218).

Health

33. For the reasons set out at IR17.219-17.225, the Secretary of State agrees that the health impacts of the Scheme have been adequately addressed (IR17.225), and the increased use of active travel would improve health, whilst the increased use of public transport could contribute to the improvement of air quality and reducing congestion (IR17.224).

Character and appearance

34. For the reasons set out at IR17.226-17.256, the Secretary of State agrees that the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment provides a satisfactory assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Scheme (IR17.235). She further agrees that the Scheme would have an adverse effect on landscape character, particularly in the vicinity of the Thames floodplain LLCA, with residual visual harm at year 15. She agrees that while landscaping would reduce these effects, they would remain significant and give rise to harm, and therefore there would be some conflict with Policy ENV1 of the SOLP and CP44 of the VWH LPP1 (IR17.256). The Secretary of State gives significant weight to landscape and visual harm.

Design of the Science Bridge

35. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's analysis of the proposed design of the Science Bridge at IR17.257-17.266. She notes the concerns of the LPA and VWH regarding the standard of design delivered by the proposed bridge at IR17.259, and the technical and practical constraints on the design of the bridge at IR17.260-17.261. The Secretary of State agrees that there is potential for improvements as set out at IR17.262-17.265, and further agrees at IR17.265 that given the engineering constraints, any enhancement of the design will necessarily be limited to the materials used and the detailed design and height of the parapets, that in themselves are subject to safety and engineering constraints, and that there is limited scope to vary the height or alignment. She agrees that safety concerns will influence the design height and appearance of the parapets (IR17.264).

36. Overall, the Secretary of State agrees that the alignment and general form of the bridge is satisfactory, and that details to be secured by condition have the potential to elevate the design of the bridge from a largely functional structure to the high-quality design sought by the Framework and development plan policies, whilst also accommodating the engineering and safety constraints (IR17.266).

Green Belt

37. The Secretary of State notes at IR17.267 that much of the site to the north of the Thames lies within the Green Belt, and that while the HIF1 route is safeguarded within the SOLP it has not been removed from the Green Belt. For the reasons given at IR17.268-17.280 and IR17.364, she agrees that the Scheme is local transport infrastructure and requires a Green Belt location, but further agrees that due to its scale as well as its visual and landscape impacts it would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt (IR17.276). She further agrees that it would encroach on the countryside, contrary to paragraph 143 c) of the Framework, but would not be in conflict with purpose (d) (IR17.280). The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that overall, the Scheme does not come within the

exceptions at Framework paragraph 155 due to its impact on openness and the conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt as a consequence of its encroachment on the countryside, and therefore would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt (IR17.281). The Secretary of State gives substantial weight to the Green Belt harm (IR17.364).

Heritage

38. The Secretary of State agrees with the approach set out at IR17.282-177.286, and notes that Historic England does not object to the Scheme on heritage grounds (IR17.287).

39. For the reasons set out at IR17.288-17.313, the Secretary of State agrees that in terms of designated heritage assets, whilst with the exception of Fullamoor Farmhouse there would be no harm to the settings of the listed buildings, the Scheme would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument A117, the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area, the Nuneham Courtenay Registered Park and Garden, Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area and Fullamoor Farmhouse (IR17.313).

40. Based on the evidence provided in Chapter 7 of the ES, the Secretary of State also considers that the Scheme would result in limited harm to two non-designated heritage assets, Hill Farm [A253] and New Hill Farm [A252] as referenced in the ES. She gives this harm limited weight.

41. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector at IR17.369 that there is some conflict with SOLP Policies ENV 7, ENV 8, ENV 9 and ENV 10. In line with paragraph 205 of the Framework, the Secretary of State gives great weight to the harm to designated heritage assets. She also considers that due to the impacts on non-designated heritage assets there would be some conflict with Policy 36 of the VWH LPP2.

Other matters

42. For the reasons set out at IR17.314-17.315, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that to ensure delivery of the approved restoration scheme at Bridge Farm Quarry, it would be necessary for the planning permissions and associated section 106 legal agreements for Bridge Farm Quarry to be formally amended with revised restoration and aftercare schemes. She notes that proposed Condition 27 would preclude development of the Didcot to Culham River Crossing section until this is complete, and that proposed Condition 26 would preclude the same section of development until revised restoration and aftercare schemes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for the Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site. She has concluded on the proposed planning conditions in paragraph 49 below.

43. For the reasons given at IR17.316-17.327, the Secretary of State agrees that the Scheme would deliver a significant increase in habitat and hedgerow units and a policy compliant increase in river units, and that it would be policy compliant. She notes that to achieve 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, a revised assessment and metric is required by condition (IR17.326).

44. For the reasons set out at IR17.328-17.330 the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's conclusion at IR17.330 that the Scheme would be safe from flooding for the

lifetime of the development and would not increase flood risk elsewhere and would comply with paragraph 173 of the Framework.

45. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's analysis of viability at IR17.331-17.337, and agrees that there is no basis to doubt the viability and deliverability of the Scheme (IR17.337).

46. For the reasons set out at IR17.338-17.339, the Secretary of State agrees that the loss of the disused pitch would not materially affect the provision and availability of sports facilities within the VWH. She notes that local sports provision is provided for through the VWH LPP1 And VWHLPP2 which are up to date, and agrees with the Inspector that the Scheme is policy compliant in this regard.

47. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's conclusions at IR17.350 regarding the potential impact on the emerging local plan.

Planning obligation and conditions

48. The Secretary of State notes at IR1.25 that the Applicant gave an undertaking to provide a £50,000 Landscaping Enhancements Fund for the local community to use more widely, but that the Applicant makes clear that that the Inspector and SoS should not place any weight on this matter in determining the application. The Secretary of State has therefore not taken this into account in reaching her decision.

49. The Secretary of State has had regard to the Inspector's analysis at IR16.1-16.9, the recommended conditions set out at the end of the IR and the reasons for them, and to national policy in paragraph 56 of the Framework and the relevant Guidance. She is satisfied that the conditions recommended by the Inspector comply with the policy test set out at paragraph 56 of the Framework and that the conditions set out at Annex B should form part of her decision.

50. The Secretary of State is also satisfied, for the reasons set out at IR16.5-16.7, that the suggested condition set out at Appendix D of the IR is unnecessary in the light of the measures within the CEMP, and should not form part of her decision.

Planning balance and overall conclusion

51. For the reasons given above, the Secretary of State identifies some conflict with aspects of policies ENV1 of the SOLP and CP44 of the VWH LPP1 on landscape and visual impact grounds, and a single aspect of VWH LPP2 Policy 23 on amenity grounds. She also identifies conflict with aspects of SOLP Policies ENV 7, ENV 8, ENV 9 and ENV 10, as well as Policy 36 of the VWH LPP2 on heritage grounds due to impacts on setting. Overall, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector at IR17.370 that the development plans expressly support the Scheme and given the relatively limited conflict with the development plans, particularly when seen in the context of the scale of the Scheme as a whole, the Scheme complies with the development plans read as a whole.

52. The Secretary of State has gone on to consider whether there are material considerations which indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in line with the development plans.

53. Weighing in favour of the proposal is: benefits to the highways network performance and resilience which carries substantial weight; and facilitating the delivery of housing

including affordable housing, local and national economic benefits, and sustainable transport benefits, each of which carry significant weight.

54. Weighing against the proposal is: Green Belt harm from inappropriateness, loss of openness and encroachment into the countryside which carries substantial weight; landscape and visual harm which carries significant weight; harm to designated heritage assets which carries great weight; and harm to non-designated assets which carries limited weight.

55. In line with paragraph 208 of the Framework, the Secretary of State has considered whether the identified 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets is outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. Taking into the account the public benefits of the proposal as identified in this decision letter, overall the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector at IR17.363 that the benefits of the Scheme are collectively sufficient to outbalance the identified 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of the Scheduled Ancient Monument A117, the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area, the Nuneham Courtenay Registered Park and Garden, Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area and Fullamoor Farmhouse. She considers that the balancing exercise under paragraph 208 of the Framework is therefore favourable to the proposal.

56. In line with paragraph 153 of the Framework, the Secretary of State has considered whether the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, loss of openness, encroachment into the countryside and other harm to landscape character, designated and non-designated heritage assets resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Overall, she considers that the other considerations in this case taken together clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other identified harms. She therefore concludes that Very Special Circumstances exist to justify this development in the Green Belt.

57. Overall, in applying s.38(6) of the PCPA 2004, the Secretary of State considers that the accordance with the development plans, and the material considerations in this case, indicate that permission should be granted.

Formal decision

58. Accordingly, for the reasons given above, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's recommendation. She hereby grants planning permission subject to the conditions set out in Annex B of this decision letter for:

- the dualling of the A4130 carriageway (A4130 Widening) from the Milton Gate Junction eastwards, including the construction of three roundabouts;

- a road bridge over the Great Western Mainline (Didcot Science Bridge) and realignment of the A4130 north east of the proposed road bridge including the relocation of a lagoon; construction of a new road between Didcot and Culham (Didcot to Culham River Crossing) including the construction of three roundabouts, a road bridge over the Appleford railway sidings and road bridge over the River Thames;

- construction of a new road between the B4015 and A415 (Clifton Hampden bypass), including the provision of one roundabout and associated junctions; and

- controlled crossings, footways and cycleways, landscaping, lighting, noise barriers and sustainable drainage systems,

in accordance with application Ref. R3.0138/21, dated 4 October 2021.

59. This letter does not convey any approval or consent which may be required under any enactment, bye-law, order or regulation other than section 57 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Right to challenge the decision

60. A separate note is attached setting out the circumstances in which the validity of the Secretary of State's decision may be challenged. This must be done by making an application to the High Court within 6 weeks from the day after the date of this letter for leave to bring a statutory review under section 288 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

61. A copy of this letter has been sent to Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC), UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport (POETS), Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Committee (NPCJC) and East Hendred Parish Council, and notification has been sent to others who asked to be informed of the decision.

Yours faithfully

Laura Webster
Decision officer

This decision was made by Matthew Pennycook MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning, on behalf of the Secretary of State, and signed on his behalf

Annex A Schedule of representations

SCHEDULE OF REPRESENTATIONS

General representations

Party	Date
Heather Isaac	20 September 2024
Olly Glover MP	5 November 2024

Annex B List of conditions

1. The development shall commence no later than three years from the date of commencement of development.

2. Other than as may be required by the conditions attached to this planning permission, the development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved documents and drawings, which include:
   • Environmental Statement Addendum (April 2023), Annex 1, Appendix 4.2 Outline Environmental Management Plan

• Transport Assessment (September 2021)
• Design and Access Statement (September 2021)
• Revised Arboricultural Impact Assessment (October 2022)
• Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan (October 2022)
• Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (April 2023)
• Flood Risk Assessment (Environmental Statement Volume III Appendix 14.1: Flood Risk Assessment September 2021)
• Flood Risk Technical Note (July 2022)
• Flood Risk Technical Note: Additional Information (December 2022)
• Environmental Statement, Volume II, Figure 10.1: Noise Location Plan
• Red Line Boundary - GEN_PD-ACM-HGN-DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZDR-T0040
• Highway General Arrangement Plans GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0001-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0007-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0008-P05 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0009-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0012-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0013-P05 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0014-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0015-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0016-P05 to GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0018-P05 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0019-P04
• Highway Swept Paths Drawings GEN_PD-ACM-HSPDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0001-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HSPDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0039-P03
• Highway Visibility Splays Drawings GEN_PD-ACM-HMLDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0001-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-HMLDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZDR-T-0015-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-HMLDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZDR-T-0016-P05 to GEN_PD-ACM-HMLDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZDR-T-0019-P05
• Swept Path Analysis Sheets 1-7 GEN_PD-ACM-HSP DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0040-P02 to GEN_PD-ACM-HSP DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0046-P02
• Preliminary Landscape Masterplans GEN_PD-ACM-ELSDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-0001-P06 to GEN_PD-ACM-ELSDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-0008-P06 and GEN_PD-ACM-ELS-
DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-0009-P07 and GEN_PD-ACM-ELSDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-00010-P06 to GEN_PD-ACM-ELSDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-0019-P06
• Lighting General Arrangement Drawings GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-1301-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-1315-P03 and GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-1316-P05 and GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-1317-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-1319-P03
• Drainage General Arrangement Plans Drawings GEN_PD-ACMHDG-DGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0001-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0004-P03 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0005-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0006-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0007-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0015-P03 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0016-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0017-P03 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0018-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0019-P03
• Drainage Catchment Plans Drawings GEN_PD-ACMHDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0020-P03 to GEN_PD-ACMHDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0038-P03 • Proposed Utilities Diversions Drawings GEN_PD-ACMVUTDGT_UTL_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0001-P04 to GEN_PD-ACMVUTDGT_UTL_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0019-P04

• River Crossing Bridge Proposed Plan and Elevations Drawings RIV_PD-ACM-SBRSW_STR_ZZ_ZZ DR-T-0002-P03 to RIV_PDACM-SBR-SW_STR_ZZ_ZZ DR-T-0004-P03
• Appleford Sidings Bridge Proposed Plan & Elevations RIV_PDACM-SBR-SW_STR_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0001-P03
• Appleford Sidings Road Bridge GA and East Elevation RIV_PD ACM-SBR-DGT_STR_ZZ_ZZ_DR-CB-0040–P02
• Didcot Science Bridge General Arrangement & Elevation DSB_PDACM-SBR-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ DR T 0001-P01
• Preliminary Ecological Mitigation Plans with and without badger mitigation (plans with badger mitigation are confidential) GEN_PDACM-EBD-DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZFG-EG-0034 Sheets 1-4-P01 GEN_PD-ACM-EBD-DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZFG-EG-0037 Sheets 1-4-P01
• Floodplain Compensation Area Sheet 1 of 1 (RIV_PD-ACM-GEN SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-HF-0011)

3. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The CEMP shall be based on the submitted Outline Environmental Management Plan and shall include the following details as a minimum:

Details of Construction Activity

• Details of roles and responsibilities of those carrying out the construction, and details of the communication strategy with local residents, landowners, community groups, businesses and others that may be affected during the construction process
• Details of construction phasing
• Details of how complaints can be made and how they will be managed
• Construction working hours and locations over weekdays, weekends and Bank Holidays
• Locations of construction compounds and structures including hoarding, access points, buildings, plant and machinery
• Details of temporary lighting proposals required throughout the construction period with an assessment of the impact of the proposed lighting on residential dwellings and biodiversity
• Details of when and how land required temporarily for construction purposes will re-instated following completion of construction and no later than one year within completion of construction in each part of the development
• Details of how continuous access would be provided to third party land and development where existing access arrangements are affected.

RWE site

The details of construction activity set out above shall include the following matters:
• Details of how unrestricted vehicular and pedestrian access to the former Didcot A power station site and the existing Didcot B power station site shall be maintained on a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week basis throughout the construction period of the development, until the HIF Scheme is practically complete, open to the public and permanent access to RWE site has been connected to the Scheme.
• Details of how protection, any diversion, and any abandonment of utilities for the above sites shall be achieved, in consultation with RWE.
• Details of the sequencing of demolition of RWE's northwest lagoon (located off the roundabout junction of the A4130, Purchas Road and Hawksworth) and construction of the replacement lagoon, so as ensure that demolition of the existing lagoon does not take place until the new lagoon has been constructed and connected to the

retained southeast lagoon (also located off the roundabout junction of the A4130, Purchas Road and Hawksworth).
• Sequencing of construction so that severance of the existing RWE gatehouse on Purchas Road does not occur until a new gatehouse (in the location identified in the outline planning permission P22/V2467/O for a replacement gatehouse) is constructed and operational, or a temporary facility has been constructed and is operational which enables the security of the RWE site to be maintained.

Noise, Vibration & Dust

• A Noise and Vibration Management Plan to set out measures to reduce, mitigate and monitor construction noise effects.
• A Dust Management Plan to set out measures to reduce, mitigate and monitor construction dust and air quality effects.

Impact on the River Thames (Part 2 of the development only)

• Details of the timing of proposed construction works over the River Thames.
• Details of the dates and times that the River Thames and Thames Path will be closed or where access will be restricted, including any restriction to the width or navigable height of the River Thames.
• Details of measures to manage and reduce to a minimum the impacts of the River Thames and Thames Path closure on users of the River and Path.
• Details of any barges, floating plant or other vessels to be used during the works adjacent to and across the River Thames.
• Details of when and how consultation and engagement with the Environment Agency Waterways Officers would be carried out through the period of works affecting the River Thames.
• Measures to be employed to and across the River Thames to minimise environmental effects (considering both potential disturbance and pollution).
• Details of measures to ensure any damage or disturbance to the towpath, banks or riverbed for the River Thames will be repaired following the completion of construction.

Biodiversity

• A risk assessment of all construction activities that may be damaging to biodiversity both on and off-site, including details of the timing of works that may harm biodiversity features including badgers, bats, otters, reptiles, and nesting birds.
• Identification of biodiversity protection zones.
• Implementation of protected species licences.
• Details of the measures to be taken to avoid or reduce impacts on species or habitats during the construction process, including species specific method statements for bats, breeding birds, and reptiles.
• Measures to be employed to avoid or reduce impacts on river species and habitats including avoidance of peak fish migration and spawning seasons, and details of fish rescue and relocation as appropriate.
• Details of bio-security measures to prevent the spread of invasive species.
• Details of Ecological Clerk of Works to oversee the construction process.

Landscape and Trees

• Details of measures to protect trees and hedgerows.
• Risk assessment of all activities that may be directly or indirectly damaging to trees both on and offsite.
• Confirmation that no soil storage mounds shall extend into root protection areas of hedges or trees.
• Details of an arboriculture clerk of works to oversee construction. • Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

Environmental Management Plans

• Site Waste Management Plan.
• Soil Management Plan (including Soil Resource Plan and Soil Handling Strategy).
• Materials Management Plan.
• Asbestos Management Plan.
• Water Management Plan.
• Details of measures to mitigate potential extreme weather events during the construction process.

The construction of the development shall thereafter be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

4. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The CTMP shall include the following details as a minimum:
   • Routeing of HGV construction vehicles to and from the site, including a scheme of construction traffic signage
   • Access arrangements for staff, contractors, deliveries and plant
   • Details of the hours within which delivery vehicles and plant can enter and leave the site
   • Wheel washing facilities and other measures to prevent mud and debris from being carried onto the highway network
   • Details of opportunities taken to enable the movement and delivery of materials via rail and other sustainable means
   • Details of Rights of Way diversions, including management and communication with local communities
   • Measures to avoid and/or reduce and mitigate adverse construction effects on the A34 The construction of the development shall thereafter be carried out in complete accordance with the approved CTMP.

5. Prior to the commencement in each part of the development, a topographical contour plan or plans to show the existing and final proposed levels of the development in that part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be delivered in complete accordance with the approved drawings.

6. Prior to the erection of any lighting on each part of the development and notwithstanding the details submitted with the application, details of proposed lighting in that part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, taking account of areas to remain unlit, including:
   - The viaduct and bridge sections of the bridge across the River Thames; and
   - The Scheme between Hartwright House and the River Thames bridge, except for where safety standards require lighting at proposed junctions. The submitted details shall include the location, height, type and direction of all light sources, including intensity of illumination, shields, sensors and timing of lighting use. The lighting scheme shall be designed to avoid disturbance of light sensitive wildlife and shall be in accordance with and shall be in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/18 ‘Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK’. Any lighting shall thereafter not be installed in other than in accordance with the approved lighting details.

7. Subject to the consideration of any details submitted pursuant to moving the proposed noise barrier near Appleford adjacent to the highway (which should cover feasibility and

change in noise level at nearby receptors) and prior to the first operational use of each part of the development, noise barriers and any other noise mitigation measures including low noise surfacing shall be installed in accordance with:

- The location of noise barriers and low noise surfacing shown in Environmental Statement, Figure 10.1[CD A.16]; and
- The heights stated in Outline Environmental Management (April 2023) [CD C.1], Table 3.3: Scheme design (D) REAC, Reference DN-2 and DN-3 This detail should be approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include elevational drawings of the barrier(s) and details of the materials, appearance, planting, specification and acoustic performance of the barrier(s).

Once erected, the noise barriers shall be retained and maintained in full working order for so long as the development is in use by motorised vehicles.

8. Prior to the commencement of construction of each of the structures listed below, details of the external appearance of the structure including, but not limited to, the colour and decorative treatment of parapets, illumination (not street lighting) finishing treatments, such as textures, to abutments, piers, wing walls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.
   (i) The Didcot Science Bridge structure (taking into account the constraints of the Network Rail design requirements, and including enhancements to the design);
   (ii) The Appleford Sidings Bridge structure; and
   (iii) The River Thames Crossing structure (viaduct and bridge).

   Each structure shall thereafter be constructed in complete accordance with the approved details prior to the development being opened to motorised vehicles and maintained thereafter.

9. Opportunities should be sought to open footways, footpaths and cycleways shown on the approved drawings, prior to first use of the Scheme by vehicles, where this does not create safety hazards to active travel users or impose unnecessarily adverse constraints on construction sequencing.

10. Visibility splays shall be provided in accordance Highway Visibility Splays Drawings Sheets 1 – 19. The visibility splays shall be maintained unobstructed as approved for so long as the development is in use by motorised vehicles.

11. Prior to the commencement of construction in each part of the development, a Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan (LBMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The LBMP shall be based on the provisions set out in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan (OLBMP) submitted with the planning application documents and shall include the following as a minimum:
   • A description and evaluation of the landscape and ecological features to be managed within the site
   • Ecological trends and constraints that may influence management • The aims and objectives of the management plan and appropriate management options for achieving the aims and objectives
   • Prescriptions for management actions
   • Preparation of a work schedule

• Details of ecological enhancements, specifications and locations to include artificial roost features for bats and birds, hedgehog domes, invertebrate houses and other features of benefit to wildlife
• Details of the individual, body or organisation responsible for the implementation of the plan; and
• Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures to ensure the development delivers the objectives set out in the plan.

The LBMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured and details of a 30-year habitat management programme. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved LEMP shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

12. Prior to the commencement of construction in each part of the development, updated protected species surveys shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for any survey submitted with the planning application that is over two years old or in the case of a badger survey when it is over six months old. The conclusions of these updated survey(s) should be included within a detailed biodiversity mitigation and enhancement strategy, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development or any required earth moving or vegetation clearance. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved updated surveys and any revised mitigation and enhancement measures contained therein.

13. Prior to the commencement of any part of the development hereby permitted, a final Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNG Assessment) and updated metric shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The BNG Assessment shall take into account the detailed landscaping scheme approved pursuant to condition 21 and the topographical tree survey approved pursuant to condition 22 as well as any other relevant factors arising since the grant of planning permission. The assessment shall demonstrate that the development will achieve no less than a 10% increase in biodiversity units above the baseline when trading rule requirements have been met. The Assessment shall also include the following:
    i. A detailed management and monitoring plan covering a minimum of 30 years for the delivery of the on-site biodiversity units identified in the BNG Assessment; and
    ii. A certificate confirming the agreement of an Offsetting Provider approved by the County Planning Authority to deliver a Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme for the provision of riparian habitat that cannot be delivered on site. The written approval of the County Planning Authority will not be issued unless and until the certificate has been issued by the Offsetting Provider. The details of the biodiversity enhancements shall meet the trading rule requirements as set out in the approved BNG Assessment and shall be documented by the Offsetting Provider and issued to the County Planning Authority for their records.

The approved BNG Assessment shall thereafter be delivered in complete accordance with the approved details.

14. Prior to commencement of development in each part of the development, a phased risk assessment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The assessment shall be carried out by a competent person and in accordance with current government and Environment Agency Guidance and Approved Codes of Practice such as Land Contamination: Risk Management 2020 and BS10175:2011 +A2:2017 'Investigation of Potentially Contaminated Sites'. The risk assessment shall include the following:
    • Phase 1 shall incorporate a desk study and site walkover to identify all potential contaminative uses on site to inform the conceptual site model. If potential contamination is identified in Phase 1 than a Phase 2 investigation shall be undertaken.
    • Phase 2 shall include a comprehensive intrusive investigation in order to characterise the type, nature and extent of contamination present, the risks to receptors and, if significant contamination is identified to inform the remediation strategy.
    • Phase 3 shall include a remediation strategy to ensure the site will be rendered suitable for its proposed use. The construction of the development shall thereafter be undertaken in complete accordance with the approved phased risk assessment and remediation strategy.

15. If, during the construction of any part of development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development in that part of the development shall be carried out unless and until a remediation strategy detailing how the contamination will be dealt with has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall thereafter be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details.

16. No drainage systems for infiltration of surface water to the ground shall be installed unless and until details have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include an assessment of risks of the infiltration to controlled waters. Where such details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, they shall thereafter only be installed in complete accordance with the approved details.

17. Prior to the commencement of development in each part of the development, a detailed sustainable surface water drainage System (SuDS) for that part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall include:
    • A compliance report to demonstrate how the scheme complies with the "Local Standards and Guidance for Surface Water Drainage on Major Development in Oxfordshire"
    • Full drainage calculations for all events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change
    • A Flood Exceedance Conveyance Plan
    • Comprehensive infiltration testing across the site to BRE DG 365
    • Details design drainage layout drawings of the SuDS proposals including cross-section details
    • Detailed maintenance and management plan in accordance with Section 32 of CIRCA C753 including maintenance scheduled of each drainage element
    • Details of how water quality will be managed during construction and post development in perpetuity
    • Consent for any connections into third party drainage systems

• Details of upstream silt mitigation prior to connection to watercourses.

18. Prior to first operational use of each part of the development, a SuDS Compliance Report for that part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The Report shall be prepared by an appropriately qualified engineer and shall demonstrate that the sustainable surface water drainage system has been installed in accordance with the details approved pursuant to condition 17). The report shall include:
    • As-built drawings in dwg and pdf format
    • Inspection details of key SuDS features such as flow controls, storage features and volumes, critical linking features or pipework with photographs and evidence of inspections
    • Details of any remediation works required following initial inspections and evidence that such remedial works have been completed
    • Details of management arrangements to maintain the system in the longer term.
    The surface water drainage system shall be maintained thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

19. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the mitigation measures set out within the following documents and these measures should retained and maintained throughout the lifetime of the development: - the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (Didcot Garden Town HIF 1 Scheme Environmental Statement Volume III Appendix 14.1: Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) September 2021; - Flood Risk Technical Note dated 20 July 2022; and- Flood Risk Technical Note: Additional Information, 8th December 2022.

20. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for level compensatory flood storage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall include measures to identify how the compensatory flood storage and any altered or proposed culverts will be inspected and maintained throughout the lifetime of the development.

21. Prior to the commencement of construction in each part of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The details shall be based on the approved Landscape General Arrangement Drawings, and shall include the following as a minimum:
    • A detailed landscape masterplan showing existing, retained and proposed vegetation. The hedgerow and trees to the B4016 tie in with the Clifton Hampden Bypass shall either be retained or replaced where possible. Consideration should also be given to planting hedges and trees to the edges of swales, low growing grass to central reserves and the translocation of beech hedge at the Culham Science Centre entrance.
    • Hard surfacing materials.
    • Minor artefacts (such as furniture, refuse or other storage units, signage).
    • Drainage features, including SuDS.
    • Details of proposed landscaping features such as climbing walls and sedum blanket.
    • Plant specifications noting species, plant sizes, numbers and densities as well as seed mix and their provenance; ground preparation and ongoing maintenance.

    The hard and soft landscaping works shall thereafter be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details and all planting and seeding shall be carried out

in the first available planting season following the completion of each part of the development.

22. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development, an updated tree survey shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The tree survey shall show the precise topographic location of all trees, capturing those not previously recorded via topographical survey, within or on the edge of the site including those where the approved Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Addendum show the locations as approximate. The survey shall ensure the important trees including Veteran Tree 424; trees T14, T102, G255, G308, T311, T498, T533, T534, T695 and T699; and trees within G1, G2 & G3 of TPO137/2009 and the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area are correctly plotted and that impacts to them are limited and quantified accurately.

23. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development, a detailed Arboriculture Method Statement (AMS) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The AMS shall set out the detailed tree protection measures that will used during the construction process and shall include cross-sections with construction depths and materials. Details of mitigation measures to offset the impacts of the installation of utilities within root protection areas shall also be included. For the avoidance of doubt no Veteran Trees or trees that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order shall be removed from the site and protection measures for Trees T424, G454 and trees subject to TPO 137/2009 shall be specifically referenced to ensure their protection during construction.

    Thereafter, trees shall be protected in complete accordance with the approved details for the duration of the construction period.

24. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development shown on drawing GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-CH-0005 Rev P02, a Carbon Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The plan shall be in accordance with PAS 2080 and shall identify opportunities to be taken to support carbon reductions and carbon emissions through the lifecycle of the development. The plan shall include a quantification of carbon emissions, target setting, baseline setting and monitoring, reporting and proposals for continual improvement. The Carbon Management Plan shall thereafter be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details and reviewed and updated every six months during the construction period.

25. Prior to the first operational use of each part of the development, an updated Climate Vulnerability Risk Assessment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The assessment shall be LA 114 Climate (June 2021) compliant and shall include details of the embedded and additional mitigation proposed for each of the climate vulnerability impacts identified within Chapter 15 (Climate) of the submitted Environmental Statement. For the avoidance of doubt, it shall also consider the effects of pot hole formation, heavy rain and wetter winters, soil stability, and drier summers. The mitigation measures identified within the assessment shall thereafter be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details.

26. No development shall take place within the Didcot to Culham River Crossing section of the development until revised restoration and aftercare schemes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for the Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site.

27. No development shall take place within the Didcot to Culham River Crossing section of the development until revised restoration and aftercare schemes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for Bridge Farm Quarry.

28. Prior to the commencement of development in each part of the development, a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation, prepared by a professional archaeological organisation acceptable to the County Planning Authority, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall provide details of the professional archaeological organisation that will carry out the investigation. The approved scheme shall thereafter be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details.

29. Prior to the commencement of development in each part of the development and following the approval of the Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation pursuant to condition 29), a programme of archaeological investigation shall be undertaken by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation. The programme of work shall include all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable archive and a full report for publication shall thereafter be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority within two years of the completion of the archaeological fieldwork.

30. Details of the design and appearance of the downgraded section of the A415 including details of materials and structures including lighting and signage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented no later than three months from the date of the downgraded section of the A415 being closed to motorised vehicle through traffic.

31. A compensatory tree planting scheme on land controlled by the applicant should be investigated with Oxfordshire County Council's Arboricultural officers, and if deemed appropriate of the compensatory tree planting scheme should be provided, including measures to be taken to protect and maintain the planted trees and replacement planting for any that die in the first 30 years following the first opening of each part of the proposed development. The approved scheme shall be implemented thereafter.

32. Details of the replacement 'RWE' lagoon (as shown on approved drawing Didcot Science Bridge General Arrangement Sheet 6 of 19 (GEN_PD ACM GEN DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ DR T 0006 Rev P04)) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The replacement lagoon shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.

33. Prior to the commencement of the Didcot to Culham river crossing section of development, the applicant shall submit details to the County Planning Authority of how it has explored the possibility of relocating the proposed noise barrier closer to the proposed carriageway open to motorised users adjacent to Appleford Village, by relocating it between the carriageway open to motorised users and the non-motorised users provision. If the submission concludes that this is not possible, or not of substantial benefit in terms of noise reduction, it shall set out the reasons why it is not feasible and desirable to move the barrier. If the submission concludes that this is possible and of benefit, then details of any proposed change to the noise barrier adjacent to Appleford Village shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the

County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any construction works as part of the submission required to be made pursuant to condition 7).

34. Prior to the commencement of the Didcot to Culham river crossing section of development, details of the noise monitoring equipment to be installed at a location in Appleford Village for the duration of the construction works of the Didcot to Culham River Crossing part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented thereafter.

35. The carbon management plan approved and updated pursuant to the requirements of condition 24) shall be further updated once the development is open to motorised vehicles to set out the measures which have been carried out to promote and facilitate a reduction in carbon emissions from the operational use of the development. This shall be submitted to the County Planning Authority no later than the first anniversary of the date of first opening to motorised vehicles and for nine subsequent years after that.

36. Prior to the commencement of the development, details of the delivery of a bus priority scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented from the date of first opening of the development to motorised vehicles. Any changes to the proposed details thereafter shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority prior to their implementation.

The Planning Inspectorate

Report to the Secretary of State

by Lesley Coffey BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Date 21st October 2024

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

APPLICATION MADE BY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

LAND BETWEEN A34 MILTON INTERCHANGE, AND B4015 NORTH OF CLIFTON HAMPDEN, OXFORDSHIRE

Inquiry Opened on 20 February 2024

File Ref(s): APP/U3100/V/23/3326625

Abbreviations Used in This Report

ASR	Annual Status Report
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
BNL	Basic Noise Level
CARF	Central Area Regeneration Framework
CCC	Climate Change Committee
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CMP	Carbon Management Plan
CRTN	Calculation of Road Traffic Noise
CSC	Culham Science Centre
DfT	Department for Transport
DGT	Didcot Garden Town
DGTDP	Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan
DRMB	Design Manual for Roads and Bridges
EA	Environment Agency
EFT	Emissions Factors Toolkit
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Environmental Statement
FoI	Freedom of Information
GHG	Green House Gas
GLVIA	Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HIA	Health Impact Assessment
HIF1	Housing Investment Fund 1
JLP	Joint Local Plan
LCWIP	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
LDO	Local Development Order
LEMP	Landscape Environmental Management Plan
LGV	Light Goods Vehicles
LLCA	Local Landscape Character Area
LOAEL	Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LPP1	Local Plan Part 1
LPP2	Local Plan Part 2
LTP	Local Transport Plan
LTCP	Local Transport Connectivity Plan
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
NIA	Noise Important Area
NMU	Non Motorised User
NNNPS	National Networks National Policy Statement

NPCJC	Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Committee
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPSE	Noise Policy Statement for England
NRTP	National Road Transport predictions
NVMP	Noise and Vibration Management Plan
OAR	Options Assessment Report
OCC	Oxfordshire County Council
OSM	Oxford Strategic Model
PIM	Pre Inquiry Meeting
POE	Proof of Evidence
POETS	Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
PROW	Public Rights of Way
SBLR	Science Bridge Link Road
SCNP	Sutton Courtney Neighbourhood Plan
SOAEL	Significant Observed Adverse Effect
SODC	South Oxfordshire District Council
SOLP	South Oxfordshire Local Plan
SoS	Secretary of State
SRO	Side Roads Order
SWMP	Site Waste Management Plan
TAG	Transport Appraisal Guidance
TfQL	Transport for Quality of Life
UKAEA	UK Atomic Energy Authority
VWH	Vale of White Horse
VWHDC	Vale of White Horse District Council
WCIP	Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan
WMS	Written Ministerial Statement

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File Ref: APP/U3100/V/23/3326625

Land between A34 Milton Interchange, and B4015 north of Clifton Hampden, Oxfordshire

- The application was called in for decision by the Secretary of State by a direction, made under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, on 25 July 2023.
- The application is made by Oxfordshire County Council to Oxfordshire County Council.
- The application Ref R3.0138/21 is dated 4 October 2021.
- The development proposed is:
  -the dualling of the A4130 carriageway (A4130 Widening) from the Milton Gate Junction eastwards, including the construction of three roundabouts;
  - a road bridge over the Great Western Mainline (Didcot Science Bridge) and realignment of the A4130 north east of the proposed road bridge including the relocation of a lagoon;
  - construction of a new road between Didcot and Culham (Didcot to Culham River Crossing) including the construction of three roundabouts, a road bridge over the Appleford railway sidings and road bridge over the River Thames;
  - construction of a new road between the B4015 and A415 (Clifton Hampden bypass), including the provision of one roundabout and associated junctions; and
  - controlled crossings, footways and cycleways, landscaping, lighting, noise barriers and sustainable drainage systems.
  The reason given for making the direction was due to the Secretary of State's policy on calling in planning applications.
- On the information available at the time of making the direction, the following were the matters on which the Secretary of State particularly wished to be informed for the purpose of his consideration of the application:
  a) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 5); and
  b) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 6); and
  c) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with the development plan for the area; and
  d) any other matters the Inspector considers relevant.

Summary of Recommendation: That the application be permitted and planning permission granted subject to conditions.

1. Procedural Matters

1.1. The Inquiry into the planning application was conjoined with the Side Roads Order, Bridge Order and Compulsory Purchase Order Inquiry. The Inquiries opened on 20 February 2024 and sat for 21 days until 9 May 2024. I carried out an accompanied site visit on 4 and 5 March 2024. I also carried out unaccompanied site visits during the course of the Inquiries and following the close of the Inquiries.

1.2. To avoid the repetition of evidence, both Inquiries were opened at the same time. The Planning Inquiry was closed on 9 May 2024. The Order Inquiry was closed in writing on 21 May 2024. The applicant was also Oxfordshire County Council. For the purposes of this report references

to Oxfordshire County Council refer to the applicant, whist references to the Local Planning Authority refer to Oxfordshire County Council as Local Planning Authority.

1.3. The planning application was called in by the Secretary of State on 25 July 2023 in exercise of his powers under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Secretary of State (SoS), particularly wishes to be informed about:

a) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Chapter 5); and

b) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 6); and

c) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with the development plan for the area; and

d) any other matters the Inspector considers relevant.

1.4. The Local Planning Authority (Oxfordshire County Council) adopted a neutral position in relation to the proposals and provided a brief opening statement to the Inquiry. It also participated in the discussion on conditions in relation to the proposals.

1.5. Rule 6 status was granted to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC), UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport (POETS), Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Committee (NPCJC) and East Hendred Parish Council.

1.6. A signed Statement of Common Ground dated 2 November 2023 was submitted. This outlined the status of the resolution of the Planning & Regulation Committee and the position of the Council on the planning application. It also included a list of suggested conditions should planning permission be granted. A supplemental Statement of Common Ground to confirm the plans/information considered by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) was submitted on 9 January 2024.

1.7. The appeal scheme qualifies as an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and therefore, an Environmental Statement (ES) was submitted with the planning application to assess the likely significant effects on a number of topic areas scoped into the report.

1.8. Following requests under Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regs) further information was submitted to the LPA in November 2022 [CD B.2] and April 2023 [CD C.2]. Alongside these response documents, two ES Addendums [CD B.1 and C.1] were submitted where the response to requests for further information

necessitated changes to the ES. The additional information provided in response to the Regulation 25 Requests did not result in a change to predicted likely significant environmental effects as reported in the ES submitted with the planning application.

1.9. The planning application was considered by the Planning and Regulation Committee on 17 July 2023, where it resolved to refuse planning permission for eight reasons. The application was subsequently called in by the SoS on 25 July. At its meeting on 27 September 2023 the Committee met to consider an officer report advising the Committee of the SoS's call in and specific matters they wish to be informed about in order to reach a decision on the case the LPA wished to put forward at the Inquiry. The Committee resolved to adopt a neutral position in relation to the Scheme and to submit a written statement outlining its remaining concerns.

1.10. A Pre-Inquiry Meeting (PIM) was held on 9 November 2023 by the previously appointed Inspector. Its purpose was to discuss the arrangements for the Inquiry and deadlines for the submission of various documents. The Inspector's note of the meeting requested:

- A Technical Note from the LPA setting out its concerns in relation to the extent of traffic modelling undertaken by the applicant, and how the applicant has approached the traffic modelling for a new road scheme, which the LPA consider to be contrary to the policies of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

- A note explaining how the LPA considers that the design of the Didcot Science Bridge can be enhanced by way of a condition when the proposal is a full application.

- A Technical Note from the applicant in response to POETS's letter to the Planning Inspectorate dated 4 November 2023. This asked for the Planning Inspectorate to issue a Regulation 25 request in relation to the adequacy of the Environmental Statement.

1.11. The information provided by the Technical Notes and the adequacy of the ES are addressed in my conclusions below.

1.12. The closing submissions in respect of the Planning Inquiry were heard on 30 April 2024 and 9 May 2024. The closing submissions on 9 May were confined to the issue of funding and viability for the Scheme, since the evidence submitted by the applicant on these matters was in relation to the Orders Inquiry, but the NPCJC wished to make submissions on this matter in relation to the Planning Inquiry. Mr Tamplin made additional closing submissions on 9 May on behalf of POETS. These closing submissions are reported in the summary of the parties' cases, however, paragraph 10 of Mr Tamplin's closing submissions raised issues of fairness in relation to the conduct of the Inquiry that I address below.

1.13. Mr Tamplin also raised concerns regarding the adequacy of the ES. In summary, POETS consider the ES to be fundamentally flawed due to the

failure to assess the significant effects of the proposed HIF1 road on Abingdon, and on the A4074 Oxford – Reading Road, and also because there is no satisfactory consideration of reasonable alternatives to HIF1 as required by the Regulations. I address the adequacy of the ES later in this Report.

1.14. Paragraph 10 of POETS supplementary closing submissions states:

> "*The response of OCC to the objectors and their cases has been nothing short of disgraceful. They have abrogated to themselves the right to put in any additional material they choose while objecting strongly to any material the objectors wish to present to the Inquiry. This has blocked and frustrated the rights of those objectors who are Rule 6 parties to the Inquiry, as if they had no status in the process."*
>
> And
>
> *"The Applicant has even gone to the length of interfering in a formal request under the Freedom of Information and Environmental Information legislation, by releasing its interpretation of the answer in advance of the official reply."*

1.15. It was a matter for me, as the Inspector appointed to conduct this Inquiry, rather than the applicant, to decide whether to accept additional documents during the course of the Inquiry. Additional documents were submitted by several parties during the course of the Inquiry. Prior to deciding whether to accept evidence from any party, the nature of the documents submitted, the reason for submission and the fairness to other parties was considered in each case. The views of all parties present were sought.

1.16. All participants in the Inquiry were treated fairly and equitably. The facts do not support Mr Tamplin's views above.

1.17. The Rule 6 objectors spent several days providing evidence to the Inquiry and also cross-examining other witnesses. They submitted supplementary statements from 3 of their witnesses (Mr Hancock, Mr James, and Professor Goodwin) as well as documents that should have ordinarily been included in the Core Documents. Moreover, they were represented by Mr David Woolley KC (now retired), and many of the witnesses for these parties were professionals within their field, albeit some of them are now retired. Accordingly, there was a degree of familiarity with the process.

1.18. Several documents submitted by the applicant reflected updates to National Planning Policy. These were relevant to the Inquiry, were uncontroversial and not contested. There were also additional plans submitted to clarify the information under discussion. These included the location of proposed housing and employment sites (INQ-3), other transport schemes within the pipeline (INQ-44) and larger scale plans of Appleford sidings (INQ-49). In addition, the applicant provided notes clarifying matters of fact referenced in evidence from their witnesses

(INQ-70, INQ-71). Again, these were not contested and did not give rise to any prejudice to any party.

1.19. Considerable efforts were made to accommodate documents submitted by the Rule 6 parties objecting to the proposal, including sourcing documents referred to for the first time during Evidence in Chief and documents provided shortly before witnesses gave their evidence and a supplemental proof of evidence submitted part way through the Planning Inquiry.

1.20. Some documents were not accepted for reasons of fairness. These included additional submissions from Mr Williams referring to traffic forecasts submitted during the first adjournment, initially on 9 March 2024, and then amended on 13 March 2024. The highway and traffic evidence had been concluded prior to the adjournment on 1 March 2024. Having regard to the views of all parties this evidence was not accepted since the applicant's witnesses had already provided their evidence and had been cross examined on this matter. A document submitted from Professor Goodwin after he gave evidence was revised to remove references to additional material and the amended version was accepted (INQ-62).

1.21. Mr Tamplin's suggestion that the applicant interfered with a Freedom of Information (FoI) request is a misrepresentation of the facts. The FoI was made by Mr Williams. It included a request for some traffic flow figures at Nuneham Courtenay and was not submitted to the Inquiry. The applicant advised that the timescale for a response would mean that the response to the FoI request would not be available until after the evidence on this topic was heard. Mr Davies, on behalf of the Council, provided the traffic flow figures to Mr Williams by way of an email in advance of a full response. Mr Woolley, on behalf of the Rule 6 objectors, took instructions and confirmed that there was no objection to the inclusion of the information from Mr Davies as an Inquiry document (INQ-67). The actions of the applicant do not represent interfering with the FoI request. There is no evidence to support Mr Tamplin's view that the rights of the Rule 6 objectors were blocked or frustrated. They were legally represented and participated fully in the Inquiry and submitted numerous documents to the Inquiry. Reasons were given for each and every document that was declined.

1.22. Paragraph 10 of Mr Tamplin's closing also states that OCC has sought to undermine the purpose of EIA legislation by refusing to respond to a repeated formal request for the issuing of a letter under Regulation 25 of the 2017 EIA Regulations for additional information on traffic flows beyond a tiny distance from the edge of the application site and have tried to prevent consideration of the effects of the traffic generated by the scheme on air quality and health in the designated AQMA in Abingdon, and on outstanding heritage assets in Nuneham Courtenay. This matter relates to the adequacy of the ES and is addressed in my conclusions.

1.23. The LPA's position is addressed in its submitted Technical Note. This concluded:

> *" In view of the additional information now provided by the applicant in their own Technical Note requested by the Inspector, the Origin review also demonstrates that the remaining concerns in relation to reasons for refusal 3 and 8 have now been addressed."*

1.24. The fact that the Council does not agree with Mr Tamplin does not mean that it has undermined the EIA process. Mr Tamplin's comments allege that the applicant tried to prevent consideration of the effects of the traffic generated by the Scheme on air quality and health in the designated AQMA in Abingdon, and on outstanding heritage assets in Nuneham Courtenay. These comments are not supported by the facts. Mr Greep's evidence included a Heritage Technical Note By Dr Gillian Scott, as well as a Further Heritage Technical Note. The heritage impacts on Nuneham Courtenay are assessed in both documents. The impacts on the AQMA in Abingdon is addressed in Ms Savage's POE. The evidence in relation to both of these matters and my conclusions on them are discussed below.

1.25. The Applicant gave an undertaking to provide a £50,000 Landscaping Enhancements Fund for the local community to use more widely, but the Applicant makes clear that that the Inspector and SoS should not place any weight on this matter in determining the application.

1.26. On 30 July 2024 the Government published a consultation on proposed reforms to the NPPF and other changes to the planning system. The SoS also made a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) entitled "Building the homes we need". The WMS is an expression of Government policy and is, therefore, capable of being a material consideration in this appeal. The parties were provided with an opportunity to comment on these matters and their responses are included in the summary of their cases.

2. Site and surrounding area

2.1. The site is a linear site that extends from the Milton interchange with the A34 to Culham Science Centre (CSC) north of the Thames. The part of the site south of the Thames lies within the Vale of White Horse District (VWHD) and that to the north lies within South Oxfordshire District.

2.2. The linear route is located to the east of the A34, the west of the A4074 and the south of Oxford. Abingdon lies to the northeast of the Scheme and is connected to it by the A415.

2.3. The existing A4130 is enclosed on one side by the railway, and the other by the Valley Park development and the agricultural land that is allocated for residential development.

2.4. The proposed Science Bridge would cross the existing railway. Didcot Power Station lies to the north of the railway and is part of a larger industrial area adjacent to Didcot. From the north of Didcot the site skirts a landfill site west of Appleford and crosses the Appleford Sidings. It follows a line between Sutton Courtenay and Appleford, both of which are rural villages, albeit located relatively close to industrial and commercial uses (to the south of Sutton Courtenay and the South and west of Appleford).

2.5. To the north of Appleford lie the former gravel pits at Bridge Farm. Whilst these are partly restored, their industrial past remains evident. The Site then crosses the Thames including the Thames Path (a national trail) and continues across agricultural land towards the CSC. At present the traffic crosses the Thames using either the Culham Cut and Sutton Bridge or the Clifton Hampden Bridge, both of which are Grade II listed and are traffic light controlled with one way shuttle working.

2.6. The site follows an easterly line and bypasses the village of Clifton Hampden. It terminates along the B4015 just to the north of Clifton Hampden. The B4015 continues towards the Golden Balls roundabout at the junction with the A4074. The A4074 provides access to the southeastern side of Oxford.

2.7. The Grade I listed Nuneham Courtenay Registered Park and Garden is located north of CSC and Clifton Hampden. It extends close to the proposed road near the Golden Balls roundabout. The Grade II listed village of Nuneham Courtenay is situated either side of the A4074 to the west of the Registered Park and Garden.

2.8. The River Thames separates Culham and Clifton Hampden to the north of the river, from Didcot, Sutton Courtenay, Appleford and Long Wittenham to the south of the river.

2.9. The landscape to the south has a fragmented and industrialised character. This relates to land uses including the former Didcot A Power Station, Didcot B Power Station, Milton Park industrial and commercial estate, Southmead Industrial Estate, working and former landfill sites,

and gravel extraction areas and pits. The landscape north of the River Thames has a more coherent rural pattern of fields, hedgerows and treelines. The exception is the CSC, which is a notable area of development on the northern side of the A415.

2.10. Trees and hedgerows within the Site and near to the Site boundary are generally found alongside roads, footpaths, settlement boundaries, railways and field boundaries, and as such the landscape has the perception of being well-vegetated, despite the broad areas of open agricultural and mining/industrial land uses.

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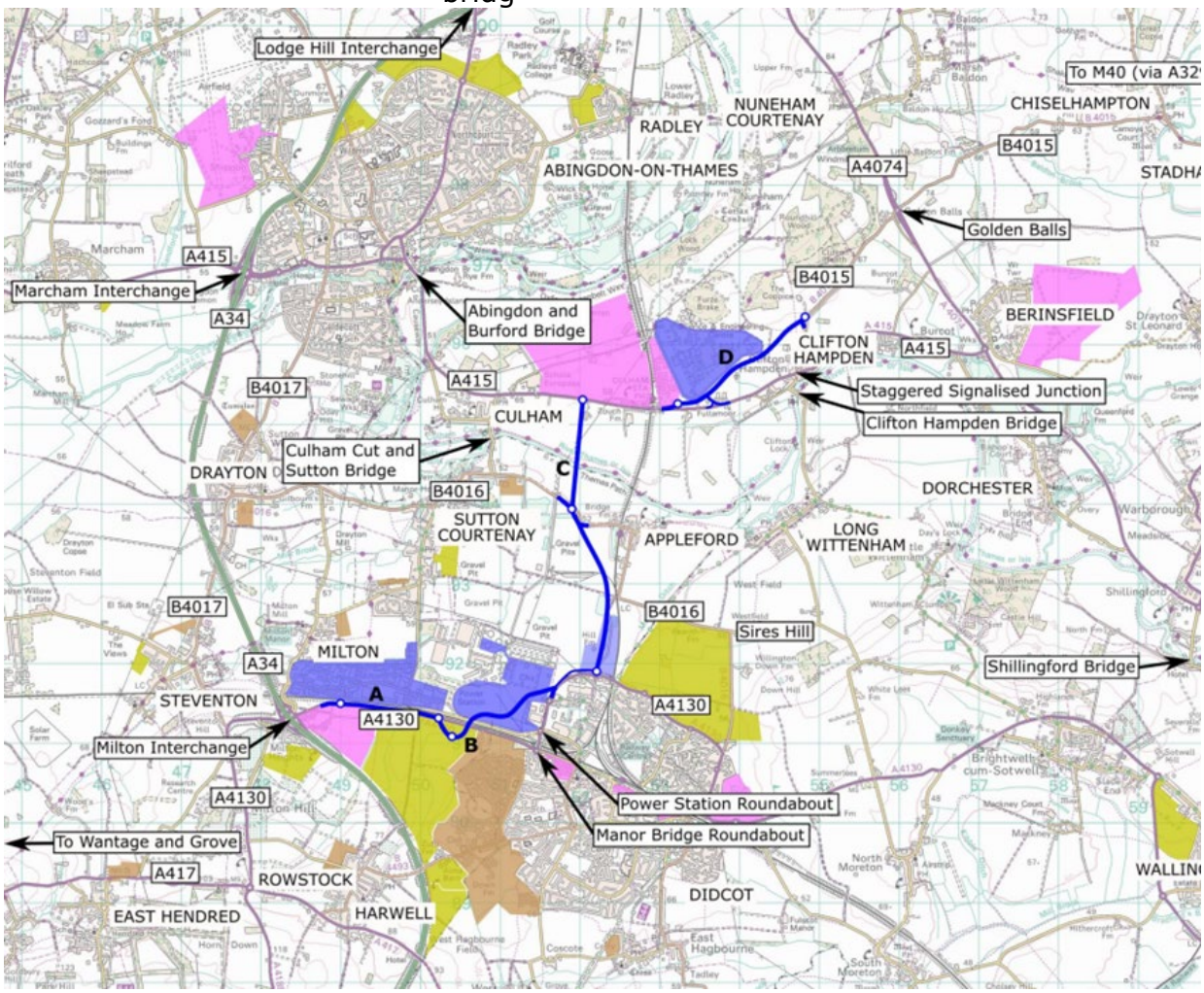

HIF map with roads and place names (Extract from INQ 3.1)

2.11. The wider area includes the Science Vale, an area of economic and innovation growth, that is home to a significant proportion of the region's scientific research and development, and high technology businesses. It includes the three centres for science and technology at Harwell Campus, CSC, and Milton Park. It is supported by settlements including Didcot, Wantage, and Abingdon amongst others.

2.12. The Science Vale is expected to deliver approximately 20,000 new homes and 20,000 additional jobs by 2031. These are predominantly located close to Didcot and the CSC and are shown on INQ 3.2. It is home to the Science Vale UK and the Didcot Growth Accelerator Enterprise Zones.

2.13. To the east is the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, including the Wittenham Clumps.

3. The Proposals

3.1. The Scheme consists of four separate but interdependent highway schemes, namely:

- the A4130 Widening;
- Didcot Science Bridge;
- Didcot to Culham River Crossing; and
- Clifton Hampden Bypass.

Mr Blanchard's and Mr Chan's POE provide a detailed description of the proposals.

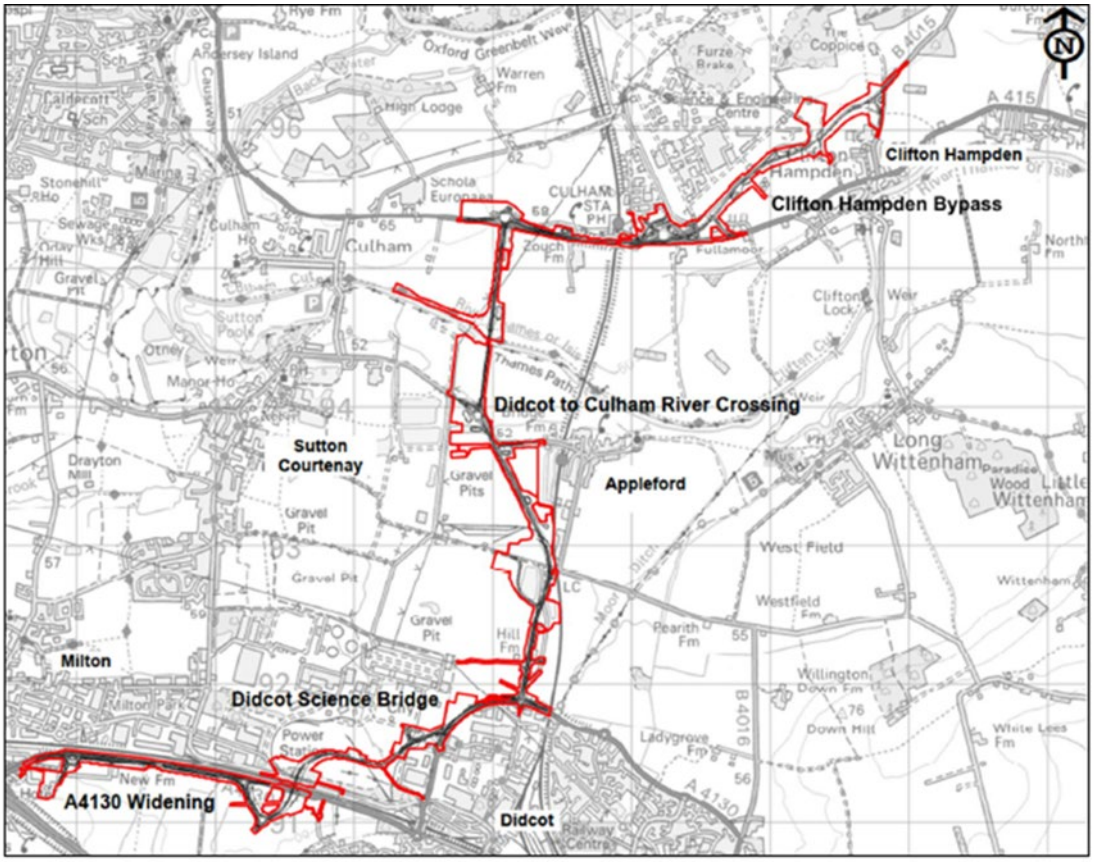

Figure 2.5: The Scheme

A4130 Widening

3.2. This part of the Scheme comprises a dual carriageway from the Milton Interchange eastwards for approximately 1.6 km to the proposed eastern roundabouts connecting into the future development at Valley Park and the Didcot Science Bridge scheme. Dualling of the A4130 will consist of modifications to the existing single carriageway, establishment of a central reserve and provision of two additional lanes to the south. The

existing single carriageway will form the eastbound carriageway towards Didcot and the newly constructed lanes will form the westbound carriageway to the A34 Milton Interchange.

3.3. The road corridor will also include a bi-directional segregated cycleway and a footway on the southern side of the dual carriageway.

3.4. The ditches, hedgerows and trees to the south of the existing carriageway will be incorporated into the new central reserve between the two carriageways where practical. The existing single carriageway will become the eastbound carriageway of the new dualled road. A new two-lane carriageway will be constructed south of the existing carriageway and will form the westbound carriageway of the improved road.

Didcot Science Bridge

3.5. This section of the proposed scheme is a new north-south bridge from the proposed Didcot Science Bridge roundabout, over the existing A4130, the Great Western Railway Mainline, and Milton Road, into the former Didcot A Power Station site. The proposed Science Bridge Link Road (SBLR) will connect the bridge with the A4130 Northern Perimeter Road north of the Purchas Road/Hawksworth roundabout, close to the existing Southmead Industrial Estate.

3.6. Planning permission (P15/S1880/O and P15/V1304/O) has been granted for a mixed-use development in the power station site and this includes the reservation of land for the SBLR and Didcot Science Bridge. There will be various embankments associated with the road bridge approaches, and they will vary in width. The road bridge will be approximately 16m in width, including a single carriageway, a bidirectional segregated cycleway and a footway on one side of the road.

Didcot to Culham River Crossing

3.7. This section of the Scheme will provide a new 3.6 km single carriageway link road west of the Cherwell Valley railway line and non-motorised user (NMU) facilities between Didcot and Culham. It will extend north from the A4130 Collett roundabout in Didcot to the A415 Abingdon Road west of CSC.

3.8. An improved and enlarged four-arm A4130 Collett roundabout will be provided. This will connect with the Didcot Science Bridge scheme to the west, the Didcot to Culham Link Road to the north, Southmead Industrial Estate to the south and to the existing A4130 to the east.

3.9. Agricultural land, private residential properties, a pallet and wood recycling centre, Sutton Courtenay landfill, and Hanson aggregate operations all lie north of Collett roundabout. A Local Development Order is being prepared to enable this agricultural area to become an employment site called D-Tech, in this 'Didcot Growth Accelerator' Enterprise Zone.

3.10. North of Collett roundabout to the southern edge of Sutton Courtenay Landfill the new single carriageway road will be approximately 20 m wide, with verges, hard strips, and segregated footways and bi-directional cycleways on both sides.

3.11. The road will extend north along the east edge of Sutton Courtenay Landfill. In this area on the west side of the road a 3.0 m shared use bridleway is provided with segregated footways and bi-directional cycleways and continues to the east side. On the west side of the road a new priority junction and access road will be provided to Sutton Courtenay Landfill (operated by FCC Environment), and Hanson Aggregates and Appleford Railway Sidings (operated by Hanson). This will replace the existing Portway Road access further north.

3.12. The road extends north to Appleford railway sidings passing along the eastern boundary of a large surface water management pond. The Cherwell Valley Line and Appleford Level Crossing are located to the east of the proposed road. Appleford Sidings bridge will be provided to bridge the road over the railway sidings and connect the north and south approach embankments.

3.13. Extending north from Sutton Courtenay roundabout a viaduct will be provided to cross the River Thames flood plain with a 155 m bridge provided to span over the River Thames. The bridge height has been designed to accommodate river traffic.

3.14. North of the River Thames, the new link road will continue north through existing agricultural land towards the A415 where a new at grade four-arm roundabout will be constructed to connect with the A415 and a new development to the north, which is an allocated site in the Local Plan.

Clifton Hampden Bypass

3.15. The Clifton Hampden Bypass will re-route traffic on the A415 around the village of Clifton Hampden, which currently experiences a large amount of through traffic as people travel between the A415 to A4074 northwest of the village.

3.16. The link road will provide a bypass northwest of Clifton Hampden village and will be approximately 2.2 km long. The new road will be a single carriageway with adjacent hard strips, grass verges, and a shared-use cycleway / footway. The bypass will be aligned in a south-west to north-east direction and will be a single carriageway, approximately 9.3 m in width including hard strips.

3.15. The A415 will be realigned north into the proposed bypass, with the existing A415 west of this point as a no through road to serve existing residences. All roundabout exits will include one lane, except the eastern bypass arm which will have two lanes. The roundabout will have a segregated left turn lane from the eastern bypass arm to the western A415 arm.

4. Planning Policy, Guidance and Law

The Development Plan

4.1. The development plan most relevant to the consideration of the Scheme comprises:

- The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (the SOLP) adopted December 2020 (CDG.1);
- Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (the LPP1) adopted December 2016 (CD G.2.1);
- Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (the LPP2) adopted October 2019 (CD G.2.7) and
- The Culham Neighbourhood Plan March 2023 (CD G.7)
- The Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan April 2024 (CD G.9.1)

South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP)

4.2. The spatial strategy of the SOLP includes:

> "*focusing major new development in Science Vale … so that this area can play an enhanced role in providing homes, jobs and services with improved transport connectivity*" and providing other strategic allocations including at Berinsfield with "*necessary infrastructure and community facilities*".

4.3. *Policy TRANS 1b* explicitly supports the delivery of the HIF1 scheme. The land needed to deliver the road is safeguarded in *Policy TRANS 3* and appendix 5. The relevant strategic housing policies emphasise the need for this infrastructure. *Policy TRANS2: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility* aims to plan positively for rail improvements within the area that support improved connectivity to areas of new development and support the provision of public transport. It also supports sustainable transport more generally and seeks to improve cycling and walking networks within and between towns and villages in the District.

4.4. *Policy STRAT2: South Oxfordshire Housing and Employment Requirements* outlines the housing and employment requirements for the District. Policies STRAT 3, STRAT 9 and STRAT 10i all refer to the infrastructure improvements necessary to deliver the Local Plan allocations. Appendix 16 of the SOLP sets out how climate change is addressed within the Plan. It lists the relevant objectives and policies.

4.5. The other policies most relevant to the appeal scheme are:

- *STRAT6: Green Belt* seeks to protect the Green Belt from harmful development and restricts development to types of development which are deemed appropriate by the NPPF, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

- *TRANS5: Consideration of Development Proposals* sets out criteria to encourage and support sustainable transport within developments.
- *ENV1: Landscape and Countryside* Sets out measures to protect national landscapes and the landscape, countryside and rural areas within South Oxfordshire more generally, including the retention of important hedgerows.
- *ENV3: Biodiversity* supports development that will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in the District and requires all development should provide a net gain in biodiversity where possible.
- *ENV6: Historic Environment* sets out criteria for development that may affect designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- *ENV7: Listed Buildings* reflects national policy in respect of listed buildings, whilst policy *ENV8: Conservation Areas* does the same in respect of conservation areas.
- *ENV 9 Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments* requires development to protect the site and setting of Scheduled Monuments or nationally important designated or undesignated archaeological remains. In exceptional cases, where harm to or loss of significance to the asset is considered to be justified, the harm should be minimised, and mitigated by a programme of archaeological investigation, including excavation, recording and analysis.
- *ENV10: Historic Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens and Historic Landscapes* requires proposals to conserve or enhance the special historic interest, character or setting of such assets.
- *ENV12: Pollution – Impact of Development on Human Health, the Natural Environment and/or Local Amenity (Potential Sources of Pollution)* states that development proposals should be located in sustainable locations and should be designed to ensure that they will not result in significant adverse impacts on human health, the natural environment and/or the amenity of neighbouring uses.
- *DES 1: : Delivering High Quality Development* requires all development to be of a high quality design
- *DES 2 : Enhancing Local Character* requires development to reflect the positive features that make up the character of the local area. Proposals should be informed by a contextual analysis that demonstrates how the design: i) has been informed by and responds positively to the site and its surroundings; and ii) reinforces place-identity by enhancing local character.
- *DES 6: Residential Amenity* requires development proposals to demonstrate that it would not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses, including through noise or vibration or gases or other emissions.

- *DES 8: Promoting Sustainable Design* requires development to seek to minimise the carbon and energy impacts of their design and construction. Proposals must demonstrate that they are seeking to limit greenhouse emissions.
- *EP1:* Aims to protect public health from the impacts of poor air quality and it states that development will only be permitted where it does not exceed air pollution levels set by European and UK regulations. Proposals are required to include measures to minimise air pollution at the design stage and incorporate best practice in the design, construction and operation of the development;

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1

4.6. The Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) was adopted in December 2016 and was subject to a review in 2021 under Regulation 10A of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Review concluded that the LPP1 remained relevant and that it was consistent with national policy.

4.7. *Core Policy 4: Meeting Our Housing Needs* outlines the housing targets for the district and identifies the key growth areas, whilst Core Policy 6: Meeting Business and Employment Needs outlines the growth in employment land associated with the Local Plan. HIF1 was assessed through the Evaluation of Transport Impacts process and identified as necessary to facilitate the delivery of the allocated growth in the Local Plan.

4.8. *Core Policy 15* LPP1 provides for 9,055 dwellings to be delivered through strategic allocations. The allocations linked to HIF1 include Valley Park allocated for 2,550 dwellings (extant outline planning permission for up to 4,254 homes), North West Valley Park is allocated for 800, Milton Heights was allocated for 400 and 458 homes have been permitted, West of Harwell Village was allocated for 200 homes and 207 have been permitted and completed, East of Sutton Courtenay (Hobby Horse Lane site) was allocated for 220 dwellings and planning permission was granted on appeal in December 2023 for 175 homes.

4.9. *Core Policy 15* also sets out an employment provision of 208 acres for South-East Vale. It explains that about 15,830 of 23,000 new jobs are located in the South East Vale area.

4.10. *Core Policy 17: Delivery of Strategic Highway Improvements within the South-East Vale Sub-Area* identifies the infrastructure required to support the allocated growth in the Local Plan. A number of strategic improvements to the road, bus, and cycling networks are identified in this policy, including the three elements of the Scheme that are in the district. *Core Policy 18* safeguards areas of land to ensure that other proposals for development do not prejudice the delivery of the identified transport schemes in Appendix E of the plan. Core Policy 18 does not

seek to show a precise alignment for the transport schemes, which will need to be informed by detailed design work.

4.11. Amongst other matters *Core Policy 33: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility* seeks to ensure that the impacts of new development on the strategic and local road network are minimised and ensure that developments are designed in a way to promote sustainable transport access both within new sites and linking with surrounding facilities and employment. Core Policy 35 promotes public transport, cycling and walking.

4.12. *Core Policy 38* sets out the design strategy for strategic and major development sites. Further detail in relation to specific allocations is provided at Appendix A of the Plan.

4.13. In the case of Valley Park the Plan requires the access on the A4130 to take into account the Science Bridge and enable its delivery and the provision of a footpath and cycleway from Great Western Park and the existing local centre to Milton Park. The Site Development Template for North West of Valley Park identified that the development will be required to provide land for widening of the A4130.

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (adopted October 2019)

4.14. *Core Policy 4a* outlines the housing targets for the district and identifies the key growth areas, including additional sites over and above those allocated in LPP1.

4.15. Core Policy 16b: Didcot Garden Town states that:

> "Proposals for development within the Didcot Garden Town Masterplan Area, as defined on the Adopted Policies Map [and shown by Figure 2.8], will be expected to demonstrate how they positively contribute to the achievement of the Didcot Garden Town Masterplan Principles."

4.16. *Core Policy 18a* updated the safeguarded land for the Culham to Didcot Thames River Crossing to reflect the latest design work undertaken at the time the Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) was produced.

4.17. *Policy DP23* requires proposals to demonstrate that they will not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses. Policy *DP25* states that noise generating development that would have an impact on environmental amenity or biodiversity will be expected to provide an appropriate scheme of mitigation that should take account of the location, design and layout of the proposed development; existing levels of background noise; measures to reduce or contain generated noise, and hours of operation and servicing. It provides that development will not be permitted if mitigation cannot be provided within an appropriate design or standard.

4.18. *Policy DP26* states that proposals that are likely to have an impact on local air quality, including those in, or within relative proximity to,

existing or potential Air Quality Management Areas will need to demonstrate measures / mitigation that are incorporated into the design to minimise any impacts associated with air quality.

4.19. *Policies DP36, DP37, DP38, DP39* address heritage assets and are consistent with policies within the NPPF. *Policy CP 46* aims to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in the District and seeks opportunities for biodiversity gain.

4.20. *Policy CP44* aims to protect key landscape features, including trees, hedgerows and views from harmful development. from harmful features. It also seeks to integrate development into landscape character and/or the townscape of the area.

Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (CD G.03)

4.21. The plan was adopted in September 2017. Policy M10 requires mineral working sites to be restored to a high standard and in a timely and phased manner to an after-use that is appropriate to the location and to deliver a net gain in biodiversity.

The Culham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2041 (CD G.07)

4.22. The Plan was made 12 June 2023. Policy CUL8 seeks to encourage safe, accessible and convenient means of walking and cycling in the parish. It also requires the strategic allocation STRAT9 Land adjacent to CSC to demonstrate that the masterplan layout enables safe and secure access to the required social infrastructure for the existing village of Culham through new, and improvement to, existing cycleways, footpaths, and bus services.

Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan (SCNP)

4.23. The Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan has now passed the referendum stage (11 April 2024) and it must therefore be made by VWHDC within 8 weeks of the referendum. The Neighbourhood Plan is in force as part of the statutory development plan from the passing of the referendum and will have full legal effect when made by the LPA.

Other Relevant Policy

Emerging South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan

4.24. The emerging Joint Local Plan (JLP) continues with the strategy of focussing growth on Didcot and the Science Vale. Proposed Policy IN3 of the Plan safeguards land for the proposed roads and bridges and safeguards all four components of the Scheme. The Plan has recently reached Regulation 19 stage, however, the extent of unresolved objections is unknown, therefore in accordance with the advice at paragraph 48 of the NPPF, the JLP attracts very limited weight.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.25. The NPPF as a whole is a material consideration in relation to this application. The NPPF emphasises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It makes it plain that planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

4.26. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF acknowledges the legal requirement for planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The SoS particularly wished to be informed about consistency with Chapter 5 (Delivering a sufficient supply of homes) and Chapter 6 (Building a strong and competitive economy).

4.27. Paragraph 157 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. It should also help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Paragraph 191 of the NPPF states that decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. Criterion a) notes that decisions should mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impact resulting from noise from new development, and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life.

4.28. Paragraph 180(e) states that decisions should prevent new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air quality. It advises that decisions should contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants.

Science Vale Area Strategy, Local Transport Plan 4 (2016) (CDG.5)

4.29. The Science Vale Area Strategy within Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) remains adopted policy until it is superseded by the forthcoming update to the area travel plans in the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTPC). The Science Vale Area Strategy identifies a wide range of improvements to support the planned growth in the area, many of which have already been delivered and others are still in the pipeline.

4.30. Policies SV 2.6, SV 2.13 and SV 2.16 all support the provision of elements of the Scheme.

Local Transport Connectivity Plan (LTCP) (adopted July 2022) (CDG.4)

4.31. The LTCP is made under the Transport Act 2000. It outlines the long term vision for transport and travel in Oxfordshire and the policies required to deliver this. The LTCP vision and policies will be used to influence and inform how transport is managed and the types of schemes implemented.

4.32. *Policy 2* seeks to develop comprehensive walking and cycling networks that are inclusive and attractive to the preferences and abilities of all residents in all towns. Policy 3 aims to implement Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for all main urban settlements (over 10,000 inhabitants) across the county by 2025,

4.33. *Policy 4* aims to identify key routes for walking and cycling between destinations across the county and prioritise interventions to existing and new infrastructure, as well as identify and support all opportunities to develop and link up the Strategic Active Travel Network in new developments, rural and major roadworks and road schemes. Policies 18, 21 and 22 of the Didcot LCWIP seeks to improve bus and rail travel and achieve greater integration of the transport network.

4.34. *Policy 36* states that in the case of road schemes, where appropriate, adopt a decide and provide approach to manage and develop the county's road network as well as assessing opportunities for traffic reduction as part of any junction or road route improvement schemes.

Didcot Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, adopted December 2023 (LCWIP) (CDG.4.1)

4.35. The Didcot LCWIP identifies the importance of the Scheme in terms of its role as part of the walking and cycling network in the area. Paragraph 2.5.10 states:

> *"The proposed Scheme is complex and formed of multiple elements. It is the cornerstone of a future wider active travel network that addresses the existing severe severance to walking and cycling created by road, rail and river in the Didcot and surrounding areas. It is the central 'puzzle piece' that unlocks a predominantly off-road walking and cycling route from Oxford to Harwell Science and Innovation Campus (and further afield in both directions) via Kennington, Radley, Culham Science Centre, multiple rail stations, and Didcot."*

Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (CD G.06)

4.36. The Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (DGTDP) is a non-statutory plan, first published in 2017, with the list of proposed projects updated in 2022. It includes all 4 elements of the Scheme. It does not set specific policies but is intended to set a vision for Didcot Town and a framework for delivering the vision. Part of its vision is infrastructure to support growth, including transport infrastructure particularly for sustainable modes of travel, and delivering a wide choice of homes. The Delivery

Plan also includes a masterplan which seeks to bring about positive change for Didcot.

4.37. The DGTDP design principle encourages pioneering architecture and the Science Bridge to be a landmark feature, reducing car use, encouraging sustainable travel modes, promoting pioneering architecture, and prioritising green infrastructure and green space over roads and parking.

Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)

4.38. NPSE aims to avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life; mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life; and where possible, contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life.

4.39. The NPSE identifies the concepts of both a Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level (SOAEL), the level above which significant adverse effects on health and quality of life occur, and also a Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL), the level above which adverse effects on health and quality of life can be detected. PPG provides further guidance in relation to these noise exposure hierarchy.

Law

4.40. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.41. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that

"In considering whether to grant planning permission [or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."

4.42. Section 72(1) requires that

"In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any [functions under or by virtue of] any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2)3 , special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

4.43. The Climate Change Act (2008) provides the legal framework which underpins much national policy on climate change and emissions. As amended in 2019, it contains obligations in terms of achieving a 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2050, as well as the requirement to set carbon budgets for five-year periods, to ensure that the target is met. The Climate Change Act also established the Climate Change Committee (CCC) who advise the Government.

5. Matters agreed between LPA and Applicant

5.1. OCC and the LPA submitted a Statement of Common Ground dated 2 November 2023.[1]

5.2. The Council is a single corporate body that has resolved on several occasions through Cabinet decisions to support and progress the Scheme. Various Cabinet resolutions are in place in this regard. The Planning and Regulation Committee has made no formal decision in relation to the application.

5.3. With regard to the July Committee meeting Refusal reason 5 – The Applicant and the LPA agree that the health impacts of the development have been properly assessed in the information in the ES and the updated clarification provided to the September Committee meeting.

5.4. With regard to the July Committee meeting Refusal reason 6 – The Applicant has agreed to upgrade up to 50 new trees to semi-mature specimens or advanced tree planting with proper maintenance of mature trees in the following areas: Didcot Science Bridge, River Thames Area, Culham Science Centre Roundabout Area, Clifton Hampden Conservation Area. The emphasis is to reduce the immediate magnitude of visual impact at Year 1, and therefore the resulting visual effect, from the key adjacent residents or stakeholders that are affected. These commitments will be addressed in the submission to be made pursuant to an agreed condition (Condition 21) should planning permission be granted.

5.5. The LPA's Planning & Regulation Committee met on 27th September 2023 to consider an officer report advising the Committee of the SoS's call in and specific matters the SoS wishes to be informed about in order to reach a decision on the case the LPA will put forward at the Inquiry.

5.6. Following the Pre-Inquiry meeting held on 9 November 2023, Officers commissioned a technical review of the traffic modelling and a note was produced which concluded that it could not support the Committee's concern that the traffic modelling carried out by the applicant had not robustly examined the wider traffic impacts beyond the application area. The Committee noted and did not dispute the findings within this technical review of the transport modelling at its meeting of 15 January 2024. The submitted Technical Note therefore represents the final position of the LPA in respect of the adequacy of the applicant's transport modelling.

5.7. A number of suggested conditions were also agreed.

[1] CD Q.01

6. Case for OCC

[*This summary of the case for the Applicant is based on the closing submissions, the proofs of evidence and other submissions to the Inquiry.]*

6.1. There is a compelling need for this Scheme. It will provide modern, fit for purpose transport infrastructure that is needed for the thousands of homes and jobs planned for the area to come forward. The Scheme is a fundamental plank of the adopted development plans for the area and will enable their ambitions to be realised. Very significant benefits flow from this: meeting housing and employment need, enabling economic growth in an area which is vitally important to the local, regional and, indeed, national economy, and doing so in a way that will facilitate sustainable modes of travel. The Scheme will have environmental benefits, particularly in taking existing and future traffic away from villages, small country roads and historic bridges, and improving residential amenity. The need and benefits of the Scheme can only attract very substantial weight. The adverse effects are, by contrast, limited in scope and number.

Issue 1: The Need For and Benefits of the Scheme

6.2. The need for the Scheme derives from the existing and planned housing and employment growth in Science Vale which includes the three centres for science and technology at Harwell Campus, CSC and Milton Park, and is supported by the larger settlements of Didcot, Grove and Wantage. Science Vale is recognised and defined in SOLP, the VWH LPP1 and LPP2, and OCC's LTCP.

6.3. It is an area of innovation-led economic growth that is home to a significant proportion of the region's scientific research and development and high technology businesses. It includes two Enterprise Zones (Science Vale UK and the Didcot Growth Accelerator). It anchors the Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine, which is a key north-south corridor of expanding employment opportunities that covers Bicester, Oxford and Science Vale.

6.4. In a letter to the Planning Inspectorate, the SoS for Energy Security and Net Zero emphasises the global significance of the CSC and the importance of the Scheme in enabling it to grow.[2]. This is further endorsed by the written and oral evidence to the Inquiry of Professor Sir Ian Chapman, the CEO of the UKAEA. It is worth emphasising that the CSC, as an internationally important centre for nuclear fusion, has a key role in promoting a lower carbon future and combating climate change.

6.5. The Scheme has been developed alongside the Local Plans for the Districts.Modelling was undertaken through the various Evaluation of Transport Impacts studies produced between 2014 and 2020 for all three

[2] CD N18

Local Plans and assessed through the examination process for the plans.[3] The Evaluation of Transport Impacts Report showed all components of the Scheme to be necessary to enable the development proposed in the Local Plans to go ahead by providing a fundamental part of the mitigation strategy required. Evidence provided to the SOLP examination showed that the Scheme would directly underpin at least 19,319 homes within SODC and VWHDC areas.[4] Taking both homes recently constructed and expected up to and beyond 2035, the figure is 29,714.[5].

6.6. The draft NPPF's proposed approach to calculating housing targets would result in substantially higher targets for both local authorities through which the HIF1 Scheme passes:

- South Oxfordshire: 579 dwellings per annum ('dpa') under the current method, rising to 1,179 dpa under the proposed approach.
- Vale of White Horse: 635 dpa under the current method, rising to 937 dpa under the proposed approach.

6.7. The Science Vale is expressly identified as a strategic focus for growth in all three Local Plans. There are a number of very large individual allocations: 3,500 homes and a net increase of 7.3ha of employment land at Land adjacent to CSC (SOLP Policy STRAT9); 1,700 homes and 5ha of additional employment land at Land at Berinsfield Garden Village (SOLP Policy STRAT10i); 2,030 homes at North-East Didcot (SOLP Policy H2); 2,587 homes at Great Western Park (SOLP Policy H2); 2,550 homes at Valley Park (with "*the capacity to deliver considerably more"* beyond 2031) and 800 at North-West Valley Park (VWHLPP1 Core Policy 15).

6.8. The proposed revision to criterion b) of paragraph 84 in the draft NPPF provides specific support for laboratories. That is a type of use strongly represented in the Science Vale, which the HIF1 Scheme will support, notably at the CSC, the expansion of which is reliant on the HIF1 Scheme. In addition, Draft NPPF paragraph 85 a) contains new policy support for infrastructure that is needed to support the growth of *'clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high-technology industries'*. This provides further policy support for the HIF1 Scheme as infrastructure needed to facilitate and support the network of high technology industries in the Science Vale.

6.9. These large strategic allocations, comprising thousands of homes and significant amounts of employment floorspace, are required to contribute to, and are dependent upon, the Scheme. Policies in the Local Plans

[4] See Emma Baker proof of evidence for SODC, which refers to CDG.16 "South Oxfordshire Local Plan Examination Note on Matter 10 – Didcot Garden Town – Explanation of traffic modelling figures" (para. 5).
[5] Aron Wisdom proof of evidence, para. 3.9 and Figure 3, pp.8-9.

expressly support all four components of the Scheme and safeguard land for them.[6]

6.10. The Local Plan policies were scrutinised and found sound by the Inspectors examining the Local Plans. The Inspectors expressly endorsed (1) the need for the Scheme as mitigation for the development proposed, and (2) the robustness of the transport studies which assessed the mitigation package. They found the Scheme to be integral to the Local Plan spatial strategies[7]. Without the Scheme, the Local Plans would fail. The planned growth could not come forward, due to the absence of the infrastructure required to support it and mitigate its impacts. This view was expressed by the Leader of SODC, Councillor David Rouane at the Inquiry, and both District Councils strongly support the Scheme.[8]

6.11. Objections to the Scheme on the basis that it is not needed, or that there are alternative solutions, must be recognised for what they are, objections to the Local Plans. The Local Plans are up to date. The SOLP was adopted in December 2020, less than five years ago such that the legislative requirement for a review has not yet arisen. The VWHLPP1 was adopted in December 2016 and reviewed in 2021. The VWHLPP2 was adopted in October 2019, such that it is less than five years old.

6.12. The suggestion by some objectors that the Local Plans are out-of-date is wholly unconvincing. No objector could point to any relevant difference between the latest December 2023 version of the NPPF and the previous iterations of the NPPF against which the Local Plans were found sound. Mr Tamplin for POETS suggested that the Local Plans were inconsistent with paragraph 115 of the December 2023 NPPF. That deals with refusal for highway schemes on the basis that there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or if the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.[9] There is no evidence whatsoever that the Scheme would cause such impacts (indeed, the Scheme would prevent such impacts which would otherwise arise).

6.13. Mr Turnbull alleged that Policy CP17 (regarding strategic highway improvements) in the VWH LPP1 was inconsistent with paragraph 116 of the NPPF, particularly the provision in sub-paragraph (a) for giving priority to pedestrian and cycle movements.[10] But the Scheme plainly does make significant and high-quality provision for pedestrian and cycle movements. In any event, the Scheme is part of a wider strategy in the Local Plans and the LTCP that prioritises walking and cycling. The only other point was Mr Turnbull's observation that Policy CP17 of the VWH

[6] Core Policies 17 and 18 of the VWHLPP1 (CDG.2.1); Core Policy 18a of the VWHLPP2 (CDG.2.7); Policies TRANS1B and TRANS3 of the SOLP (CDG.1).
[7] See VWHLPP1 Inspector Report at paras. 144-145 (CDG.2.5); SOLP Inspector Report at paras. 74, 91, 93, 121, 136, 182, 200, 213-216 (CDG.1.8).
[8] SODC opening statement para. 2 (INQ-05); VWHDC opening statement para. 3 (INQ-06).
[9] In cross-examination by Mr Humphries KC, day 2 (21 February 2024).
[10] Cross-examination by Mr Humphries KC, day 3 (22 February 2024)

LPP1 refers to the LTP4, which has not been superseded by the LTCP[11]. But as is clear from the LTCP, the policy support for the Scheme in LTP4 has been carried forward. The Science Vale Area Strategy supports the continued delivery of all four components of the Scheme.[12]

6.14. The emerging JLP can attract at most very limited weight, and even it did attract greater weight, it supports and safeguards all four components of the Scheme (in proposed draft Policy IN3)[13].

6.15. As explained by Mr Wisdom, the Scheme will also address:

a. The poor existing highway network performance;

b. The under-provision of active travel in the area;

c. Improvements in public transport; and

d. The need for adequate network resilience and safety.

6.16. Didcot and the wider Science Vale area has seen considerable housing and employment growth over the past 30 years. This has led to significant traffic growth, both within the town and related to commuting across the wider area. Junction capacity assessments using 2020 base traffic flows show that a number of junctions are operating over capacity in either or both the 2020 morning and evening peak hours. In particular:

a) The Clifton Hampden signalised junction is significantly over capacity (practical reserve capacity is -241.2% and -273.1% in the AM and PM peaks respectively) and is subject to significant queuing[14].
b) The Tollgate Road / Abingdon Road junctions, including at the Culham Bridges, see very significant queues, including of up to almost 1.2km in the AM peak.[15]

6.17. The extent of these highway issues has resulted in proposals for single dwellings being refused planning permission on highway grounds, with the refusals being upheld at appeal.[16] OCC has subsequently adopted a Development Release Strategy, which allows the delivery of housing, subject to mitigating measures, but that strategy is expressly predicated on the Scheme coming forward.[17]

[11] Cross-examination by Ms Lambert, day 3 (22 February 2024)
[12] 'LTP4 Review' at p.24, and Appendix 1 Policies SV2.6, 2.13 and 2.16 at p.156 – 158 (CDG.4).
[13] January 2024 Preferred Options Consultation, pages 503 – 505 (para (1)(k) and (5)) (CDG.18). See Mr Greep's proof at para. 3.4.6 - 3.4.11 and 7.1.7(d).
[14] Paragraphs 3.5.20 – 3.5.21 and Table 3.9 (concerning junctions OFF6 and OFF7) in the Transport Assessment (CDA.07).
[15] Paragraphs 3.5.26 – 3.5.31, Table 3.12 and Figure 3.25 (concerning junctions OFF10 and OFF11) in the Transport Assessment (CDA.07).
[16] See Mr Wisdom proof para. 4.14, citing the four appeal decisions.
[17] See the Development Release Strategy at Mr Wisdom's Appendix AW2.2.

6.18. In cross-examination of Ms Currie, Mr Woolley sought to downplay the extent of the current congestion. Ms Currie agreed that there was not gridlock currently but did not otherwise accept Mr Woolley's suggestion. While there might not be gridlock today, there would be in 2034 unless the Scheme comes forward. This is demonstrated by the modelling results for 2034 without the Scheme, which shows severe congestion at many more junctions across the network, with queues of over 600 vehicles long.[18] Indeed, the model when run at full demand in 2034 without the Scheme showed gridlock and, therefore, to get the model to work at all it had to be run at 70% of demand with the results then factored up to full demand.[19]

6.19. Objectors have suggested that the Scheme is only a short-term solution. This view is reliant on the graphs from the Transport Assessment which allow comparison of average speed and journey times between 2024 without the Scheme and 2034 with the Scheme. They also note that some of the development sites in the Local Plans may not be fully built out by 2034, such that further growth may come forward after 2034.[20] That misrepresents the evidence. The graphs show that with the Scheme in 2034, average journey times and speeds are broadly similar to 2024 without the Scheme. That means that, despite all the planned growth, the Scheme allows the road network to function in 2034 (in addition to delivering significant levels of high-quality cycling and walking infrastructure) and thereby succeeds in its objective of allowing this planned growth to come forward. In addition, whilst average times and speeds across the network will be broadly similar in 2024 without the Scheme and 2034 with the Scheme, the detailed junction assessments show that acute current issues at particular junctions (especially around the river crossings) are significantly alleviated.

6.20. The graphs show that without the Scheme, by 2034 average speeds and journey times will be very significantly worse, evidencing the gridlock that Ms Currie said would occur. That is what the Scheme avoids, which is a major and long-term benefit. Nor is there any evidence before the Inquiry that after 2034 the position will deteriorate.

6.21. On top of the clear evidence from the modelling is the powerful evidence from those who actually have to use this highway network today. The Inquiry has heard extensive first-hand evidence of the real world problems this network is causing to people's lives today, even before the impact of thousands of new homes is added to the network. For example:

[18] See Table 6.17 in the Transport Assessment (p.95), in particular junctions OFF3, 4, 5, 6 & 7, 9, 10, 11 and 13, showing for example queues of up to 220 vehicles at OFF3, 459 at OFF4, 539 at OFF6&6, and 654 at OFF9 (CDA.7).
[19] As explained at paragraph 5.3.11 of the Transport Assessment (CDA.7). It is also worth noting that this was after the demand reduction had been made for new developments in the future model year (i.e. demand was reduced to 80% of what would otherwise have been the total).
[20] See Transport Assessment section 6.11, including figures 6.29 – 6.32 (CDA.7), as relied on by e.g. Professor Goodwin proof of evidence, appendix p.8 last two paragraphs. A similar argument was put by Mr Woolley to Ms Currie in cross-examination (day 7, 29 February 2024).

a. Mr Jonathan Alcantara, who is responsible for the Culham Bus Club which transports 500 pupils daily to six schools, explained how on a normal day the queue is up to 30 minutes at the Culham Bridges, and in the event of a road closure elsewhere the delays can grow to an hour. When the bridges close due to flooding, the diversion through Abingdon can take more than two hours. The result is hundreds of children late for school and missing hours of education, or having to get up earlier and earlier in order to spend time sitting in traffic.

b. Sue Scane, Deputy Chair of Didcot First and Chair of Didcot Volunteer drivers, explained how the volunteer drivers taking people to medical appointments have to suffer delays, unreliable journey times, and very significant diversions. Ms Scane's statement was supported by evidence to similar effect from David Pryor, the chair of Didcot First.

c. Councillor Sally Povolotsky explained the effect of the current situation on her local residents in the Hendreds and Harwell division for which she is the county councillor, that "the impact on daily lives is exhausting, the alternatives [to driving] aren't viable in terms of efficiency or cost" .

d. Simon Peacock, Chair of Western Valley Parish Council, made comments to similar effect, commenting that "*the road infrastructure is woeful at the moment*".

6.22. There is also strong support from UKAEA, whose presence at this Inquiry as a Rule 6 party is indicative of the importance of the Scheme to them, and various other commercial parties and private individuals. There is no evidence that the views of POETS and the NPCJC put forward to this Inquiry are representative of the vast majority of those who live and work in the area.

6.23. In Didcot and the wider Science Vale area the active travel network is fragmented and limited. For example, there is currently no direct cycle route between Didcot and CSC, but only convoluted options including on narrow and congested roads which are not conducive to cycling. Such cycle paths as exist are often narrow and uninviting, such as that along the A4130, with at most a thin buffer between cyclists and often heavy traffic thundering along the carriageway.

6.24. Due to the severance created by the River Thames to the north and the Great Western mainline to the south, coupled with the historic road network and frequent traffic congestion, bus journey time reliability suffers in the area and that in turn impacts attractiveness and viability. There are currently only limited north-south services operating across the river to the north of Didcot. The existing transport network in and around Didcot (and with the expected levels of housing and employment growth) will not operate efficiently for any mode of transport without intervention. The representation from the Oxford Bus Company provides particularly powerful evidence of this. It explains how the current

congestion and inadequate infrastructure is a serious barrier to attractive, reliable bus services and that:

"*the delivery of the proposals is crucial to directly supporting the efficient and reliable operation of existing services*". There is great irony in the position of objectors to the Scheme who promote buses as an alternative to the Scheme, but actually jeopardise even the existing services if the Scheme was to be refused as they suggest. The Company concludes that "*without the timely delivery of the proposals, the level and quality of bus service both current and in the future, would be placed in very serious peril*"[21].

6.25. The existing bridges at Culham and Clifton Hampden are listed C19 structures in Flood Zone 3. In 2021 and 2024 they had to close due to flooding for almost a week, exacerbating already serious congestion issues and leaving some villages temporarily without a bus service at all.[22] The Scheme is needed to provide resilience in this respect.

6.26. The Scheme will address all the above issues in an integrated and effective way. It will in future years take traffic out of villages and settlements, including (but not limited to) Appleford, Clifton Hampden, and Sutton Courtenay as follows:

a) In Sutton Courtenay, the traffic flows with the Scheme are substantially reduced from the no Scheme position. The links through the village see reductions of between 18% and 49%.
b) Over the Culham Bridges, the reduction would be 70% in 2034 with the Scheme (from c.10,000 to c.3,000 vehicles per day), and a similar percentage reduction in 2024[23].
c) In Appleford, the daily traffic flow reduces by 64% with the Scheme in place in 2034.[24]
d) In Clifton Hampden, the daily traffic flow reductions are between 77% and 83% with the Scheme in place in 2034.

The Scheme would also reduce traffic noise in settlements and address the air quality and climate change impacts of congestion.

6.27. The Scheme offers vastly improved opportunities for active travel and public transport. The assumption underpinning a number of objections, that the Scheme is essentially a 'road only' scheme bears no relation to what is actually proposed and what it will achieve. In particular:

[21] CD N7.
[22] See Aron Wisdom proof at para. 4.12 and Figures 6 and 7 (p.17-18).
[23] Ms Currie Appendix CC2.9 Table 3.1 and 3.3 – see links 30, 31, 32 and 34, and Appendix CC2.7 paras. 5.6 – 5.10. See ES Chapter 16 Fig. 16.4 for the location of the links (CDA.15.16).
[24] Ms Currie Appendix CC2.9 Table 3.1 and 3.3 – see link 26. See ES Chapter 16 Fig. 16.4 for the location of the links (CDA.15.16).

a) The road capacity provided by the Scheme would enhance bus journey time reliability and enable new bus service links, as evidenced in the representation from the Oxford Bus Company.[25]

b) There are significant active travel benefits in the provision of approximately 20km of new and/or improved off-carriageway cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. As explained by OCC witnesses, these would be attractive and spacious, with buffers between the cycleways / footways and vehicular carriageways, convenient crossing points prioritised for non-motorised users wherever possible, and well-lit and safe.

c) The Scheme also enables wider connectivity to footpaths, bridleways, and other cycle networks. Indeed, the Didcot LCWIP states that HIF1 is "*the central 'puzzle piece' that unlocks a predominantly off-road walking and cycling route"*[26]

d) The Scheme does not aim to provide unlimited highway capacity for cars and has not been modelled and designed on that basis.

e) The Scheme is fundamental to delivering the aims of the Didcot Garden Town. By reducing the impact of existing and forecast traffic within the area using a 'decide and provide' methodology, the Scheme will help to make walking and cycling more attractive and to realise the network of improvements identified in the adopted Didcot LCWIP.[27]

6.28. The Scheme is embedded in the DGTDP, which includes all four components of the Scheme.[28] It specifically supports the Didcot Science Bridge as a mechanism for "*Reducing traffic travelling through the centre of Didcot by re-directing as much traffic as possible around the town's northern periphery*" and reducing severance caused by the railway line.[29] It promotes the enhanced walking and cycling provision along the A4130 between Milton Interchange and Didcot that will be delivered under the Scheme.[30]

6.29. Objectors have referred to the Garden Line proposal in the DGTDP, which is a proposed cycle and pedestrian route between Harwell and Culham, via Didcot.[31] The Scheme and that proposal are not mutually exclusive however: the Delivery Plan envisages both potentially coming forward.[32] Also it should be recognised that by the Scheme incorporating segregated cycling and walking provision alongside the new carriageway,

[25] CD N.7
[26] CD G.4.1 at para. 2.5.10.
[27] CD G.4.1 at para. 2.5.10 – 2.5.11.
[28] CD G.6See fig. 5.32 ("Currently proposed infrastructure schemes"), p.128-129
[29] CD G.6Section 5.5.1, p.101.
[30] CD G.6 Page 113, fig. 5.19.
[31] CDG.6 Section 9.3.7, p.332-335.
[32] CDG.6 E.g. the figure on p.337 in section 9.3.8 of the Delivery Plan .

including across a new bridge over the Thames, the Scheme is to a very significant extent realising this objective. It should also be noted that the Garden Line is no longer included on the list of Revised DGTDP Projects 2022, submitted to the Inquiry by VWHDC.[33]

6.30. Finally, the need for and benefits of the Scheme are recognised in national policy, which is strongly and directly supportive of the Scheme.

a) The Scheme, by being rooted in development plan and transport plan policy, is *"genuinely plan-led"* (NPPF paragraph 15).

b) In accordance with NPPF paragraph 11, the Scheme enables sustainable growth by "*aligning growth and infrastructure"*.

c) Of very direct relevance to the Scheme is NPPF paragraph 74. It encourages larger scale housing, such as seen in the large allocations in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Plans, providing that "*The supply of large numbers of new homes can best be achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages or towns"*. This comes with the caveat: "*provided they … are supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes*". That is precisely the function of the Scheme.

d) The Scheme, by unlocking economic growth and employment sites, is also directly aligned with NPPF paragraphs. 85-86 which seek to "*create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt*", including by addressing "*potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure*".

6.31. The evidence before this Inquiry is that the need and benefits are compelling and worthy of very substantial weight. That evidence has not been seriously challenged. POETS, the NPCJC and certain other objectors raise specific points of opposition in respect of alternatives and the modelling, but there has been no coherent and evidenced case put to the Inquiry gainsaying the need and benefits case. The Inspector is invited to conclude that the need and benefits, as advanced by OCC, the Districts and other supporters, are wholly made out.

Issue 2: whether the transport modelling on which the proposal is based is robust and takes account of any significant traffic impacts in the wider area

6.32. The evidence has clearly shown the modelling approach to be robust. It has been developed over a number of years and has been carried out in three stages, each building on previous work and ensuring that the best available traffic data has been used in the decision-making process.

[33] Mr Butler proof, Appendix 1 – see proposed project number 11 in the table.

a. First, high level strategic modelling was undertaken using the Oxfordshire Strategic Model (OSM), a model which considers Oxfordshire as a whole. Ms Currie has explained that the OSM is fully compliant with Department of Transport's (DfT) Transport Appraisal Guidance (TAG) and has passed the appropriate calibration and validation criteria.

b. Secondly, detailed microsimulation modelling of the entire Didcot area (including the area covered by the Scheme) was carried out using the Didcot Paramics Microsimulation Model. This model has likewise been calibrated and validated in accordance with TAG and other guidance, and validation data confirms it as a robust base for use in assessing developments and infrastructure proposals.[34]

c. Thirdly, detailed assessment of specific junctions was undertaken using standalone junction models, utilising industry-standard software tools and relying on the output flows from the validated Paramics model.[35]

6.33. The modelling has in turn formed the basis for the comprehensive Transport Assessment supporting the Scheme.

6.34. The robustness of the modelling has been confirmed by:

a) The expert evidence of Ms Currie to that effect, who is a highly experienced expert in traffic modelling.

b) The calibration and validation process set out above.

c) Its compliance with TAG and other relevant guidance.

d) The fact that the traffic flow information from the OSM was used as the basis for the evaluation of traffic impacts arising from the development proposed in the VWH LPP1, VWH LPP2, and SOLP. The Inspectors relied on the modelling as a sound basis to understand the traffic impacts.

e) The review of the modelling by the Transport Development Control Team of OCC. The Highway Authority scrutinised the modelling as part of the planning application process, including by taking advice from external modelling consultants, and confirmed that they were satisfied with the modelling.[36]

[34] Ms Currie POEf para.2.45 and Appendix CC2.2 Didcot Microsimulation Base Model – Development Report, especially section 6.
[35] Ms Currie POE paras. 2.52 – 2.60.
[36] Ms Currie POE paras. 4.10 – 4.13, including TDC response dated 27 July 2022 enclosing at Appendix 1 the Technical Note by JCT Consultancy dated 28 January 2022 (CDE.42), and subsequent TDC response dated 1 February 2023 (CDE.71).

f) The review by Origin transport consultants, who rejected concerns raised about the extent of the modelling, in particular in not including junction modelling for the Golden Balls roundabout or for Abingdon.[37]

6.35. Contrary to the suggestion by some objectors, there is no inadequacy in the extent of the modelling or the area over which impacts have been assessed. A full response to this issue is provided in the Applicant's Technical Note dated 14 December 2023, responding to POETS' request for a regulation 25 direction.[38] There has been no detailed engagement with or rebuttal of that Technical Note by objectors.

6.36. The Scheme does not change people's route choice into or out of Abingdon. The route remains along the existing A415, as shown in the route options map in the Technical Note.[39] Nor does it change the number of movements, as shown by the outputs of the modelling.[40] Any increase in movements is created by growth in housing and employment in the area, not the Scheme. The impact of that growth has been assessed as required through the Local Plans, and the impact of future development will be assessed through planning applications. Whether the assessment needed to include Abingdon was the subject of a regulation 25 request from OCC as LPA on 26 April 2022, to which the Applicant responded in November 2022.[41] OCC as the LPA were satisfied with that response, and the position has been re-reviewed by Origin transport consultants in their December 2023 note. Origin were content with the position and the LPA again agreed.[42]

6.37. The Scheme would not change a driver's route choice to travel through the Golden Balls roundabout, and so it is not required to be scoped into assessments. The Scheme would enable traffic to avoid Clifton Hampden and Burcot when travelling to the roundabout, thereby changing the direction that the roundabout is approached from, but the overall flows at the roundabout would not be materially changed.[43] This is shown by the modelling, which indicates that with the Scheme there will be a substantial decrease in traffic flows on the A415 Abingdon Road through Clifton Hampden and Burcot villages and a broadly corresponding

[37] CDO.2: LPA's Technical Note and attached Origin Technical Note dated December 2023.
[38] CDO.1 at paras. 2.1 – 2.40.
[39] Figure 6, p.8 (CDO.1).
[40] See Ms Currie Appendix CC2.9 Table 3.3 (pdf page 93), which with the Scheme ('DS') in 2024 for Link 35 (A415 Abingdon Road, west of the Tollgate Road junction) shows an increase of only 3% (290 vehicles out of c.11,000) as compared to a no scheme ('DN') scenario. In 2034 for Link 35, the modelling output shows an increase of 52% (Table 3.1, pdf page 86), but Ms Currie explains (rebuttal proof para. 5.6.10) that this is because DN flows on this link are suppressed in 2034 due to the network being congested at the A415/Tollgate Road junction, i.e. it is not the Scheme that is creating the increase, but rather the network is so congested that traffic does not get through. For the link locations, see ES Ch. 16 Transport, Fig. 16.4 at p.17 (CDA.15.16).
[41] The Regulation 25 request dated 26 April 2022 is at CDB.02 Appendix A. The response related to Abingdon is at CDB.02 Appendix I.
[42] CD O.2 Origin Technical Note dated December 2023 at paras. 2.11 – 2.22.
[43] This was accepted by Mr Roger Williams when put to him in cross-examination (day 2, 21 February 2024). Also see route options map for Golden Balls at Figure 8, p.11 of the Technical Note (CDO.1).

increase on the B4015 Oxford Road to the North where it connects to the Clifton Hampden Bypass.[44] It should be noted that an A4074 Corridor Strategy is currently underway in accordance with Policy 53 of the LTCP, and SV policies in the Science Vale Area Strategy specifically propose connectivity improvements at the Golden Balls roundabout.[45] These proposals are separate to the Scheme, and it should be recognised that the Scheme does not purport to deal with all transport issues across the whole of the Science Vale area.

6.38. The position is the same in respect of Nuneham Courtenay. Regardless of the direction of approach to the Golden Balls roundabout, the volume of traffic going through Nuneham Courtenay will not be materially different with or without the Scheme.[46] The with and without HIF1 Scheme figures for Nuneham Courtenay, which were provided when requested by objectors, showed that for 2024 the difference would only be 2% in traffic flows.[47]

6.39. In respect of areas to the west of Milton Interchange, on the A4130 towards Rowstock, East Hendred and Wantage, the assessment shows no material change in traffic flows as a result of the Scheme.[48] Accordingly, no wider modelling or assessment to the west is required.

6.40. The Technical Note explains that other settlements and areas referred to by objectors were properly scoped out of the traffic assessment for the Scheme, such as Berinsfield, Chalgrove and in the area north and northwest of the A34 Milton Interchange. Growth has, however, been assessed through the Local Plans.[49] Further, in terms of other environmental impacts, the Technical Note explains that the ES considered the potential for impacts beyond the Scheme boundary, and defined study areas accordingly.[50]

6.41. Induced traffic, which has been raised by various objectors, can occur when a scheme causes people to choose to travel by car rather than by public transport and/or decide to travel when they would not otherwise have done so. Induced traffic has been the subject of study and has been taken into account in transport appraisal methodology prescribed in TAG. The traffic modelling used to develop the Scheme has followed this guidance, including undertaking the checks in respect of induced traffic

[44] Ms Currie Appendix CC2.9 Table 3.3 (pdf page 93). For the link locations, see ES Ch. 16 Transport, Fig. 16.4 at p.17 (CDA.15.16). Ms Currie explains that the 2034 increase of 116% is greater than the 81% decrease, because 'without Scheme' flows on those links are suppressed in 2034 due to the network being in gridlock, i.e. it is not the Scheme that is creating the increase, but rather the network is so congested that traffic does not get through (Ms Currie rebuttal proof para. 5.6.12).

[45] CD G.4 SV2.17, 2.18 and 2.19 in Appendix 1 of the LTCP

[46] When this was put to Mr Roger Williams in cross-examination (day 2, 21 February 2024), he was unable to contradict it or provide any contrary evidence.

[47] INQ-67.

[48] As was accepted by Mr Roger Turnbull, contrary to his written evidence, when confronted with the relevant figures in cross-examination (day 3, 22 February 2024). See Ms Currie Appendix CC2.9 Table 3.1 (pdf page 85),.

[49] CD O.1 Paragraphs 2.29 – 2.31

[50] CD O.1 paragraphs 2.34 – 2.40 of the Technical Note

that the guidance provides need to be carried out. Those checks show minimal percentage change in trip numbers, by mode of travel, with and without the Scheme, which show that induced traffic is not a concern in respect of the Scheme.[51] No contrary evidence has been provided to the Inquiry to contradict this evidence from Ms Currie.

6.42. Professor Goodwin expressly accepted that he did not provide any evidence from the traffic modelling to suggest that it shows induced traffic.[52] Mr Ng suggested that induced traffic would materialise, but by reference to very different types of projects (e.g. motorways and tunnels) which are not comparable to the present Scheme, and based on data which is in many cases very dated. As explained in more detail under Issue 8 (climate change) below, this evidence from Mr Ng in no way undermines the Scheme-specific modelling undertaken by the Applicant.

6.43. It became apparent that some objectors, when referring to induced traffic, were actually concerned with re-routed or redistributed traffic, i.e. traffic that is already on the wider network but chooses to divert onto the Scheme.[53] But the modelling is designed to forecast traffic on the future network (i.e. including the Scheme), taking account of the choices that drivers are likely to make. TAG expressly provides that the model must be geographically large enough to allow for the strategic re-routing impact of interventions such as the Scheme. Accounting for redistribution is fundamental to the modelling undertaken and fully taken into account.[54]

6.44. The principal rerouting suggestion put forward by objectors was diversion off the A34 and use of the HIF1 roads in order to join the A4074 at the Golden Balls roundabout.[55] The traffic modelling does not indicate that the Scheme will reassign strategic traffic in this way. The route via the HIF1 roads is approximately 20 kilometres in length with the need to navigate 13 junctions and has sections limited to 30mph and 40mph (including 20mph in Nuneham Courtenay), whereas the route via the A34 is approximately 15 kilometres in length with the need to navigate two junctions and for the vast majority is on 70mph roads.[56] The HIF1 Scheme is obviously not, and is not designed to be, an attractive alternative for drivers to reroute from the A34 to/from Oxford and beyond.

6.45. Various objectors raise concerns as to traffic data and assumptions informing the traffic modelling being from 2016/2017, before both Brexit and Covid. This matter has properly been taken into account and does

[51] Ms Currie POE paras. 5.2 – 5.11 and Table 6 and Ms Currie's Appendix CC2.7 paras. 2.1 – 2.3 (p.60 pdf).
[52] In cross-examination by Mr Humphries KC, day 5 (27 February 2024).
[53] See e.g. Ms Casey-Rerhaye's oral evidence and cross-examination by Mr Humphries KC, day 5 (27 February 2024).
[54] Ms Currien POE paragraphs. 2.1 – 2.65.
[55] E.g. by Mr Roger Williams, POE paragraph 3.5.
[56] Ms Currie Appendix CC2.7 para 4.21, including Figure 1 showing the two alternative routes (pdf page 65).

not affect the robustness of the modelling. Data from automatic traffic counters on the local highway network has been interrogated from pre-Covid (2017, 2018 and 2019) and post-Covid (2023) years, along with data from the A34 for the strategic highway network (for 2018, 2019 and 2023).[57] The data shows that overall flows are well within acceptable percentage daily variation such that their difference can be considered insignificant. The historic flows can, therefore, be considered to have remained unchanged from the pre-COVID and the pre-Brexit flows when compared to those observed in 2023. They are not significantly different and do not impact the overall modelling assessments. The uncontradicted evidence is clear that there are no long-term effects that need to be considered.

6.46. Objectors sought to rely on uncertainty in traffic modelling as weighing against the Scheme. Professor Goodwin drew attention to the '*scenario analysis*' required under the Uncertainty Toolkit associated with the latest version of DfT's TAG Unit M4 Forecasting and Uncertainty, dated November 2023. He also relied on the National Road Transport Predictions (NRTP) 2022 and highlighted the large range of traffic growth in the forecasting period of 35 years from 8% to 54%.[58] However:

a. The NRTP 2022 expressly state that they are intended for use for strategic policy development, and to provide a consistent policy baseline for transport business cases. The NRTP 2022 state that, given their strategic, high-level nature the projections are not intended to be directly used to appraise individual road schemes, nor are they intended to be used to consider capacity changes on a specific road or solutions to specific local issues.

b. The NRTP 2022 suggest that a specific scheme model should be used, using local information. That is exactly what the traffic modelling for the Scheme does, through the three tiers of OSM, Paramics and junction modelling.

c. Further, determination of the present planning application does not involve strategic policy development or assessment of a business case, but assessment of the planning merits of the Scheme.

d. Professor Goodwin also agreed that there is no requirement in the latest TAG guidance to re-model earlier forecasts (such as the outputs of the traffic modelling for the Scheme), whether based on the NRTP 2022 or otherwise.

6.47. More generally, it is inevitable that there will be some uncertainty with projections. That is not a substantive argument against the Scheme. In light of the powerful evidence as to the urgent need for the Scheme, any uncertainty inherent in the fact that traffic modelling involves projections does nothing to undermine the case for the Scheme. Professor Goodwin

[57] Ms Currie POE paragraph 5.31 – 5.40.
[58] Professor Goodwin POE paragraphs. 9 – 21.

referred to the potential for future modal shift and behaviour change, and Mr Turnbull thought that greater modal shift should be modelled. [59] The argument that the Scheme should not be progressed because there cannot be 100% certainty as to the projections, or in the hope of some unanticipated and wholly improbable further modal shift materialising is, with respect, irresponsible. It is 'playing dice' with people's future – their ability to get to work and school, to get to hospital appointments, to do all the things which they should be able to take for granted.

6.48. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the network (for car, bus and non-motorised users) is not fit for purpose currently, even leaving aside the impact of the substantial housing and employment growth that is coming forward. It is of course right to consider the robustness of the modelling, but the question of precisely how much worse the problems will get in the future should not obscure the fact that the deficiencies are plain to see on the ground today.

6.49. In summary, the traffic modelling provides an entirely robust basis to assess the need for and effects of the Scheme in traffic and transport terms. It incorporates three tiers of modelling and has been developed and found to be sound over the course of a decade, in particular through the Local Plans that relied on it, and in the course of this application through review and scrutiny by OCC's Transport Development Control team. The Inquiry has the largely unchallenged expert evidence from Ms Currie, which has comprehensively shown the issues raised by objectors – including the suggestion of wider impacts to the west and east, induced traffic, and uncertainty – to be without substance and to provide no proper basis to go behind the model outputs.

Issue 3: Whether the proposal would make acceptable provision for sustainable travel, including walking and cycling, and accord with the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan

6.50. The Scheme accords fully with the LTCP, which further emphasises that the Scheme is a genuinely plan-led proposal. All four components of the Scheme benefit from specific local transport plan policy support in LTP4. In particular in the Science Vale Area Strategy in proposals SV2.6, 2.13 and 2.16.[60] The more recent LTCP notes the ongoing work to deliver schemes from the LTP4 Area Strategies. In respect of the Science Vale Area Strategy, it makes clear that the four components of the Scheme are in the course of being delivered.[61] In this way the specific policy support for the Scheme is carried forward into the LTCP.

6.51. The LTCP Policy 36, which expressly recognises that road schemes may be required.[62] That accords with the specific support for the Scheme in

[59] Cross-examination by Mr Humphries KC, day 3 (22 February 2024).
[60] CD G.5.1 Proposal SV2, page 43 of 85, and Figure 1 (p.51) (.
[61] CD G.4 Policies SV2.6, 2.13 and 2.16
[62] CD G.4 See p.105: "

Appendix 1 to the LTCP. The policy provides that OCC will "*Only consider road capacity schemes after all other options have been explored*". In the present case, the very thorough optioneering exercise undertaken means that this criterion is satisfied. No other option achieves the Scheme objectives, as recognised by adoption of policy supporting the Scheme in LTCP Appendix 1.

6.52. Policy 36 requires, where appropriate, a decide and provide approach to be taken to proposals for new road schemes. In compliance with that, the traffic modelling for the Scheme adopted a decide and provide approach, notwithstanding that the modelling was undertaken before the LTCP was adopted.[63] In particular, the Transport Assessment makes it clear that the Scheme does not aim to provide unlimited highway capacity or remove all congestion, but is part of a balanced transport strategy which also provides high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, helping to engender modal shift to more sustainable modes.[64] The transport model for the 2034 year assumes 80% demand of vehicular trips (of new housing and employment demand) compared to 'normal'.[65] Conversely, if a 'predict and provide' approach had been taken, a full 100% demand of vehicular trips for future growth would have been included in the model, and the Scheme designed to cater for that full amount of traffic growth. Professor Goodwin described the 20% reduction for new development that has been built into the modelling as ambitious and close to the limits of what might be achievable, which emphasises how fully the Applicant has taken on board decide and provide principles.[66]

6.53. The future year modelling (2034) utilised the housing and employment trajectories provided by the District Councils. In some cases the sites will not be fully built out by 2034, such as the land adjacent to CSC, which is allocated in the SOLP for approximately 3,500 new homes, but has been modelled at 1,850 dwellings, being the number that SODC advised would be delivered in that timeframe. This is another element of the 'decide and provide' methodology, whereby the Scheme has been assessed against a lower level of growth and therefore accounting for fewer vehicle trips than might otherwise be expected. Conversely, if a 'predict and provide' approach had been taken, the full build out of all sites would have been included in the model, and the Scheme designed to cater for that full amount of vehicle growth without accounting for any modal shift and vehicle trip reduction.

6.54. The Scheme's inclusion of high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, helping to engender modal shift, and the Scheme's role in enabling future bus services to operate, further show the Scheme to be adopting a decide and provide approach.

[63] Ms Currie POE paragraphs 5.12 – 5.26.
[64] CD A.7 Paragraph 1.1.1 (CDA.7).
[65] CD A.7 Paragraphs 5.3.8 – 5.3.10
[66] Cross-examination by Mr Humphries KC, day 5 (27 February 2024).

6.55. Origin transport consultants, in their review for the LPA, concluded that:

> "The Decide and Provide [modelling] approach has been taken into account with sustainable travel measures included as key components of the Scheme and this has been reflected in the method used for the junction impact assessment of the Scheme alongside trip reduction assumptions."[67]

Accordingly, there is compliance with Policy 36.

6.56. LTCP Policy 52 provides that OCC will develop and deliver area transport strategies. Production of these strategies, which have now been renamed Area Travel Plans, is underway. As Mr Disley explained, it is the intention for the Didcot Area Travel Plan to put the transport user hierarchy into practice by focusing on the improvement of walking, cycling, public and shared transport infrastructure, the latter including the Scheme, enabling more of the current network to be prioritised for non-car modes.[68] In this way, the Scheme accords with Policy 52.

6.57. The LTCP includes 'headline targets', which include vehicle reduction for Oxfordshire.[69] These targets are for the LTCP as a whole, rather than targets that all of its strategies, schemes and measures are required or committed to meet. As explained by Mr Disley, there is plainly significantly greater scope for reducing car use in urban environments such as Oxford City rather than the relatively rural environment in which the Scheme is located.[70] Further and in any event, the Scheme will contribute to LTCP car trip reduction and modal shift targets through the provision of dedicated infrastructure for non-car modes of travel. Accordingly, suggestions by objectors that the Scheme conflicts with these targets are unfounded.

6.58. The suggestion by some objectors that the Scheme is not part of an integrated transport strategy is plainly without substance when the Scheme is understood within the LTCP. The Science Vale Area Strategy in Appendix 1 of the LTCP includes a range of proposals, including but certainly not limited to the components of the Scheme. There are several cycle and walking proposals (e.g. SV2.1, 2.2, 3.5), bus proposals (e.g. SV2.3, 2.4, 2.25), and rail proposals (e.g. SV1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9).

6.59. The Scheme offers vastly improved opportunities for active travel and public transport. It is plain that the Scheme makes proper and highly beneficial provision for sustainable travel, in particular by enhancing bus journey time reliability and enable new bus service links, as evidenced in the representation from the Oxford Bus Company, and providing approximately 20km of new and/or improved off-carriageway and high

[67] CD O.2 Annex 1

[68] Mr Disley POE paragraph 2.54.

[69] CD G.4 Page 33

[70] John Disley evidence in chief, day 8 (1 March 2024).

quality cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.[71] The Didcot LCWIP 2023 describes the Scheme as:

"the cornerstone of a future wider active travel network that addresses the existing severe severance to walking and cycling created by road, rail and river in the Didcot and surrounding areas".[72],

The Scheme realises the objective of the DGTDP n of providing a new and high-quality cycling and walking route linking Didcot and Culham.[73]

6.60. Mr Blanchard and Mr Chan explained how wherever possible the design of the Scheme prioritises pedestrians and cyclists. A specific concern raised by objectors relating to connectivity between Appleford and Sutton Courtenay actually served to illustrate how comprehensive the walking and cycling provision is in the Scheme and the step-change it offers to the current situation. In particular, the Scheme will offer off-carriageway pedestrian and cyclist provision from where it connects into the existing B4016 to the west of Appleford, then across the new Sutton Courtenay roundabout, and linking back into the B4016 to the east of Sutton Courtenay.[74] Currently, there is no segregated provision at all in this location, not even a footway, which together with the lack of street lighting and the 60mph speed limit makes active travel highly unattractive.

6.61. Accordingly, the Scheme fully complies with and gains strong policy support from the LTCP. It is a key part of the LTCP integrated transport strategy for the Science Vale, complies with specific policies including on taking a decide and provide approach, makes extensive and high-quality provision for active travel (i.e. walking and cycling), and enables improved public transport through enhancement to bus journey reliability and potential additional services. The Scheme also lines with the vision led approach to promoting sustainable transport modes within paragraph 112 of the draft NPPF

Issue 4: Consideration of alternatives

6.62. This Inquiry is concerned with the Scheme for which planning permission is being sought, not some other, alternative, project. The question of whether to grant planning permission must be determined by reference to the planning merits of the Scheme. Case law indicates that the consideration of alternative sites or schemes will only be relevant to a planning application in exceptional circumstances.[75] In the present case, OCC say that no such circumstances exist. The Scheme has express and

[71] CD N.7
[72] CD G.4.1 at paragraph 2.5.10.
[73] CG G6 fig. 5.32 p.128
[74] CD D.11 and CD D.12 General Arrangement Plans Sheets 11 and 12
[75] See *R (Save Stonehenge World Heritage Site Ltd) v Secretary of State for Transport* [2022] PTSR 74 at [268-272] and *Bramley Solar Farm Residents Group v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities* [2023] EWHC 2842 at [162-163].

strong support in the development plans for the area and in the LTCP; the broad route is safeguarded in the development plans; there is compliance with the development plan overall and any areas of non-compliance are limited; the benefits are wide-ranging and compelling; any harms are limited in number and extent, and are inevitable for a project of this sort. Taken together, that weighs strongly against any suggestion that exceptional circumstances exist making alternatives relevant.

6.63. The Scheme is the product of a detailed and multi-stage optioneering process which took place between 2014 and 2021. The process has been extensive and iterative, as summarised in Mr Wisdom's POE (sections 8, 9, 10 and 13). Particular milestones were the production of the Options Assessment Reports (OAR) Part 1 and Part 2 in 2018 and 2019 respectively and then a further OAR in 2021 which reflected the updated evidence base and replaced, but utilised, the 2018 and 2019 OARs. The 2021 OAR followed a phased process, which included the following:

a) Initial sift of 16 options (plus a 'do minimum' option comprising no interventions, making 17 in total).[76] These included numerous public transport and active travel options, as well as highway and multi-modal options. The public transport options included an enhanced bus network, improved rail services, bus rapid transit links, rail rapid transit links, and demand responsive travel. All options were assessed against the Scheme objectives, including the eight final Scheme objectives adopted in the OAR 2021, which address four themes of: supporting housing development; supporting economic growth; future-proofing (i.e. network resilience); and sustainable travel.[77]

b) The initial sift identified five options that would contribute to achieving the level of growth aspired to in Science Vale. They included the four HIF1 Scheme components, plus an option comprising improved rail stations at Didcot and Culham, and a new station at Grove. The other options, including the other public transport and active travel options, performed less well against the objectives and so were not taken forward.

c) The five shortlisted options were then assessed based on a methodology comprising a five business case approach and a framework based on DfT's Early Assessment and Sifting Tool guidance. The new / improved rail stations option was discounted, based on concerns regarding significant cost, deliverability, and potential to support planned growth across Didcot and Science Vale.[78]

d) The remaining four options, comprising the Scheme components, were then subject to further optioneering including routing and design. Various alignments were considered for all the elements (other than the

[76] CD A.19.1 Appendix A Sections 5 and 6
[77] CDA.19.1 Appendix A Table 4-6
[78] CD A.19.1 Appendix A OAR 2021, section 7.7 ()

A4130 widening). The Didcot to Culham river crossing was subject to particularly extensive optioneering, with six separate alignments considered in detail, and the various benefits and drawbacks of each taken into account.[79]

6.64. The optioneering process was subject to significant consultation and engagement with local stakeholders. This included consultation through the consultation on the VWHLPP1 and LPP2 and the SOLP, the LTP4, and Scheme-specific consultations in 2018 and 2020. Changes were made to reflect concerns, including moving the Didcot to Culham river crossing west to take account of environmental concerns of Appleford Parish Council, inclusion of low noise road surfacing and noise barriers at sensitive locations, and amending the alignment of the Clifton Hampden bypass to take account of the environmental concerns of Clifton Hampden Parish Council. The planning application itself has also been consulted upon, including through further consultation on response to EIA regulation 25 requests.

6.65. Objectors at the Inquiry have raised purported alternatives to the Scheme and suggested that the Scheme is not needed as a result. As set out above, even if some feasible alternative existed, that would not be a reason to refuse planning permission in the absence of exceptional circumstances. In any event there are no feasible, realistic alternatives. In particular:

a) Improved and more frequent bus services. Buses cannot operate effectively in significant congestion – they become unreliable, unattractive and unviable, as compellingly explained in evidence to the Inquiry from the two organisations who actually operate buses in the area: the Oxford Bus Company and the Culham Bus Club. Options comprising improved bus transport, including bus rapid transit, as standalone options were found not to meet the objectives. Public transport options are also inherently more challenging in a dispersed, rural area such as Science Vale, as compared with urban environments.

b) As to improved walking and cycling provision, the Scheme does include significantly enhance active travel provision, but this is not an alternative in itself, as recognised by this option not scoring well as a standalone option.

c) Improved and more frequent rail services are also relied upon heavily by objectors. But rail options would not enable the planned growth across the Science Vale, given rail options are focused around existing lines. Further, any service improvements would have to be developed in liaison with Network Rail, such that they are out of the control of the Applicant to deliver. They would also potentially require four-tracking of the line between Oxford and Didcot, which would have significant environmental impacts. Also rail options are likely to be

[79] CD A.19.1 Appendix A OAR 2021, section 8.4, especially fig. 8-3 ()

very expensive. The optioneering did not find rail options to be preferred, when assessed against the objectives. Rail is an important part of the LTCP strategy, including proposals for improving Culham rail station linked to the STRAT8 and STRAT9 allocations, but it is not an alternative to the Scheme.

d) Suggestions that increased working from home might be an alternative are entirely without evidential foundation and is contradicted by Ms Currie's evidence set out above as to the latest traffic data, including post-Covid, not showing a reduction in traffic.

6.66. Further, even if some feasible alternative could be identified (which it cannot), it would be unfunded and therefore not a deliverable alternative. Suggestions by objectors that the HIF1 Scheme funding could be reallocated do not appreciate that government funding for the Scheme has been awarded for the Scheme in particular, after submission of a business case for the Scheme to Homes England, and the announcement by Government in March 2019 that the bid had been successful in securing funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund of £218m towards delivery of the Scheme.[80]

6.67. The alternatives put forward by objectors are entirely inchoate. They are high level ideas only, which have not been consulted upon or analysed, and which are unfunded. The Applicant's optioneering has considered them all in some form and rejected them as not meeting appropriate objectives. There is a pressing need for the Scheme now to address and accommodate hugely important housing and employment growth; it would be quite wrong to reject the Scheme on the basis that some unspecified alternative might come forward at some unspecified future point in time (and when all the evidence is that it will not).

6.68. Objectors have suggested that the Scheme alignment and design around the Appleford Sidings is unsatisfactory and that preferable alternatives exist. The Applicant submits that what is proposed is sensitively designed and does not give rise to any unacceptable adverse impacts, for example in respect of noise, air quality, or landscape and visual impacts. The Applicant also says that the alternatives proposed are not feasible.

6.69. The alignment of the new road between Didcot and the river crossing has been the subject of significant consideration and optioneering, as set out by Mr Wisdom.[81] This included significant engagement with Appleford Parish Council and other stakeholders in the area, notably RWE the operators of the power station, FCC the operators of the landfill site, and Hanson (now Heidelberg) the operators of the aggregates site. An alignment significantly west of that proposed would not be feasible because of impacts on the operation of the power station and the aggregates site, and the need to cut through deep active landfill.[82] An

[80] Mr Mann POE paragraphs. 5.12 – 5.15.
[81] M Wisdom POE paragraphs. 8.80 – 8.105.
[82] Mr Wisdom's POE (p.68-73).See figures 19, 20, 21, and 22

alignment closer to that proposed, but still to the west, would also present major challenges: it would cut across the south west corner(or the middle) of the rectangular FCC lake, which is used for drainage by FCC; it would involve excavating landfill, due to the new access track to the west of the pond crossing landfill; it would require a longer bridge as the sidings are wider on this alignment; and it would cross the high point of the land, c.2m higher than the current alignment so potentially increasing visual impacts.[83] It would also be significantly more expensive than the proposed alignment.[84]

6.70. Objectors have suggested that a level crossing over the sidings rather than a bridge would be a preferable alternative but, as Mr Chan and Mr Wisdom explained, the freight trains are shunted back and forth along the rail sidings throughout the day as wagons are loaded/unloaded. Therefore trains would be sitting on the sidings for periods of the day, as and when required by the operations of the private companies. This would prevent the new road from serving its purpose, as it would be severed by stationary trains. Additionally, even when trains were not stationary over the crossing, driver delay as a result of a level crossing would make the new road less attractive. This could result in drivers continuing to route via the existing river crossings and through villages, including Appleford. Furthermore, any new level crossing, especially with the expected usage on the new road, would create safety issues.[85]

6.71. Mr Chan gave expert evidence identifying these design constraints, he was not challenged on them in cross-examination, and there has been no contrary technical evidence from any objector.

6.72. In conclusion, the Scheme has been the subject of a very extensive and robust optioneering process, which has shown that there are no feasible and realistic alternatives to the Scheme. That includes all of those advanced by objectors, such as public transport (bus and rail) and active travel options. The existence of alternatives is not generally a basis to object to the grant of planning permission, but in any event the work done has shown that there are none here. Optioneering at a more detailed level, such as the alignment around Appleford, has likewise shown that what is proposed achieves the Scheme objectives and has been carefully designed to minimise impacts.

Issue 4A: adequacy of the Environmental Statement

6.73. POETS and certain other objectors have raised two principal issues in respect of the adequacy of the ES. First, it is suggested that the scope of assessment is inadequate, in particular in respect of geographic areas beyond the Scheme boundary. Secondly, it is said that there has been a

[83] Mr Wisdom's POE, p. 73-76 See figures 23, 24, 26 and 27
[84] Mr Wisdom's POE on p.75 Table 14.
[85] Mr Chan in evidence in chief.

failure to assess reasonable alternatives, particularly in respect of non-road alternatives. Both allegations are entirely without merit. The Applicant has provided a full response on these matters in its Technical Note dated 14 December 2023. Mr Maddox's POE and rebuttal POE also provides further evidence in support on this issue. Objectors have provided no substantive response to the Technical Note or Mr Maddox's evidence, simply maintaining the allegation that the ES is deficient without engaging with the Applicant's reasoned explanation as to why that is not the case. Accordingly, the Applicant's response to these allegations remains essentially as set out in the Technical Note and Mr Maddox's evidence.

6.74. The geographic scope of assessment was defined based on likely significant effects. The areas referred to by objectors were properly considered to be outside those where significant effects were likely. The Scheme will not materially increase traffic flows in Abingdon, or at the Golden Balls roundabout, or to the north at Nuneham Courtenay, or to the west beyond the Milton Interchange. The objectors have produced no contrary evidence that traffic flows in these locations will be changed, such that their point is pure assertion.

6.75. The bespoke methodologies in respect of specific environmental disciplines were all based on the potential for significant environmental effects and the assessments were tailored accordingly – including in respect of the issues particularly raised by objectors, such as transport, air quality, and noise and vibration. Accordingly, in so far as the ES does not present detailed assessments of the Scheme's effects upon settlements located further west and east of the Scheme, that is for the entirely proper reason that these areas have been considered as part of the EIA process early on, and it has been shown that significant environmental effects would be avoided in these locations.

6.76. The methodology and study area were discussed and agreed with the LPA, Local Highway Authority (Oxfordshire County Council), and National Highways (with responsibility for the A34 through Oxfordshire) during pre-application scoping. Where the LPA considered that further information was required, it was requested and supplied via the two regulation 25 requests.

6.77. On the second issue, the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 requires the ES to include:

"a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment".

The ES plainly complies with that obligation, in particular through Chapter 3 – Assessment of Alternatives.

6.78. A wide range of alternatives have been considered, across various assessments spanning a decade, including different transport modes, public transport, active travel and different highways schemes. Overall, 13 different reports were reviewed and summarised in ES Chapter 3: Assessment of Alternatives. Those reports included extensive consideration of options beyond alternative routes, for example public transport-based options, and options based on cycling and pedestrian facilities, notably in the OAR Part 1 (2018), the OAR Part 2 (2019), and the OAR 2021.

6.79. POETS at paragraph 23 of their letter rely on *Holohan and Others v An Bord Pleanála [2018]* PTSR 1054 (Case C- 461/17) , but fail to recognise that the Court of Justice of the European Union in that case stated that:

"… it must be held that [the EIA Directive] does not require the main alternatives studied to be subject to an impact assessment equivalent to that of the approved project …".

Accordingly, the alternatives do not require the same level of assessment as the chosen proposal. In the present case, reasonable alternatives were subject to assessments proportional to their stage of optioneering and design.

6.80. The LPA agreed that the ES properly considered reasonable alternatives, as summarised in the report to the Planning and Regulation Committee held on 17th and 18th July 2023. Accordingly, the ES is entirely sufficient and legally compliant in scope and content. Contrary to the suggestion by POETS, there is no need for the Inspector or SoS to issue a further request under regulation 25 of the EIA Regulations.

Issue 5: the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape, including any loss of trees and/or hedges

6.81. The effect of the proposal in landscape and visual terms has been the subject of a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) within ES Chapter 8. The methodology and scope, including study area, viewpoints and visualisations were agreed with the landscape officers at OCC as LPA and SODC and VWHDC .

6.82. The LVIA identifies that there will be some significant landscape and visual effects, but it is notable that these are relatively limited in extent and scale. Such effects are likely to be inevitable in respect of a major infrastructure scheme such as that proposed. That is not to diminish the effects, but rather it is important to keep that in mind when weighing the effects against the significant benefits of the Scheme in the planning balance.

6.83. The Scheme crosses no designated landscapes of any type. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape is some distance to the east of the

Scheme and there are no adverse landscape effects at all on the National Landscape.

6.84. Further, and contrary to the suggestion by objectors, only a relatively limited amount of the Scheme could properly be described as being located in open countryside. Much of the southern half of the Scheme is located in a landscape heavily influenced and fragmented by existing road and rail infrastructure, industrial, commercial and minerals uses, and existing or former landfill sites. North of the Thames a significant length of the Scheme follows the existing A415. That does not apply to the bridge over the Thames and the Clifton Hampden bypass, but the localised nature of the impacts to which they give rise need to be recognised.

6.85. In terms of landscape effects, significant (i.e. moderate adverse and large adverse) effects during construction and at operation year 1 arise at the site level and the local landscape character area (LLCA) level, in particular the Thames Floodplain LLCA (i.e. around the Thames river crossing) and the Clifton Hampden Farmland LLCA. But by operation year 15, the landscape residual effects are only significant at site level, and only moderate adverse as opposed to large adverse.[86]

6.86. In terms of visual effects, the effects again diminish by operation year 15, with residual significant effects occurring at Appleford (viewpoint 10), on the Thames Path trail (viewpoints 18 – 21), at the entrance to the Culham Science Centre (viewpoint 27), and around Clifton Hampden (viewpoints 31, 34, 36, 36a, and 37). Of those residual effects, only at two viewpoints (19 and 20 close to the bridge on the Thames Path trail) is the effect large adverse, as opposed to moderate adverse.[87]

6.87. In respect of the A4130 widening and Didcot Science Bridge elements of the Scheme, all the way up to Appleford, there are no significant adverse visual effects at all.

6.88. Any impacts of the raised section at the Appleford Sidings Bridge should not be overstated. The land to the south and west is used for landfill and aggregates operations, and its sensitivity is accordingly reduced. To the east are properties in Appleford along Main Road, but there is significant screening between those properties and the Appleford Sidings Bridge in the form of the existing mature tree belts on the west side of the railway. The vast majority of these tree belts are to be retained (or are outside of the red line altogether).[88] They are dense and tall, with the

[86] CD B1 Annex 4 ES Chapter 8, Table 8.13 (p.68)

[87] CD B1 Annex 4 ES Chapter 8, Table 8.14 (p.72-73)

[88] The existing tree belts / vegetation and what is proposed in terms of further screening around the Appleford Sidings Bridge is shown in a number of places. See CD B.2, Appendix W Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report, October 2022 pdf p.62 and 65 ;Tree Constraints Plans Sheets 22 and 25; and pdf p.175 and 178 Tree Protection Plans Sheets 22 and 25. See also the two plans INQ-49.1 and INQ-49.2 showing the heights and dimensions of the Appleford Sidings Bridge, its distances from properties,

heights reaching up to 17m. That is taller than the Appleford Sidings Bridge, which will be about 12m to the top of the noise barrier (on the eastern side of the bridge), with the tallest vehicles 2m or so above that. The height and density of the tree belts varies, but it evidently will provide substantial screening.

6.89. Mr Hancock's images inappropriately remove all of the existing planting, and show none of what is proposed, such that they are plainly an inappropriate basis for understanding the landscape and visual impacts of the Scheme, as agreed by Mr James.[89] Mr James queried in oral evidence whether tree retention was viable close to the road alignment, but the tree protection plans show that a buffer is left between the existing trees and the road to allow for construction, and that notwithstanding this the significant majority of the tree belt remains. Planting is proposed around the road once constructed and there is no reason to think that this additional planting will not establish as Ms Ash explained.

6.90. The HIF1 road alignment also soon diverges away from the Appleford properties when travelling north, and the photomontage from the Appleford recreation ground shows how the Scheme will not be visible at all from this location in either winter or summer views.[90]

6.91. Bridge Farm Quarry has been highlighted by Mr James, but currently there is no public access to the area. The visualisations for viewpoint 16, where there is public access, show how the viaduct will be seen in the context of a landscape heavily subject to human influence around the former quarrying works, and the LVIA reasonably assesses the effect as reducing from moderate adverse at operational year 1 to slight adverse at year 15.[91] Ms Ash recognises that if public access for recreational use is provided to the gravel lakes area in due course, there may be a significant residual effect, but the limited scope of this potential effect needs to be recognised. The currently approved restoration plan dated February 2024 shows only limited public access in the form of a small car park, a relatively short length of footpath and a bird hide, all located immediately adjacent to the alignment of the B4016. The HIF1 Scheme's enhanced walking and cycling provision in the vicinity of these proposed facilities would potentially help to facilitate any such public access.[92]

6.92. There are significant residual effects along the Thames Path (viewpoints 18, 19, 20, 21). It is notable, however, how effective the planting is in screening and softening the new bridge in the visualisations, such that only when close to the bridge does the effect reach large adverse at year 15 (viewpoints 19 and 20); otherwise it does not exceed moderate

and estimated tree heights. Finally, see the revised landscape masterplans, sheets 9 and 10 (revised versions dated 26 June 2023) (CDD.142).

[89] INQ 43

[90] CD A.16 Viewpoint 14, ES Figure 8.76

[91] CD A.16 Viewpoint 16, ES Figure 8.79. For assessment, see CD A.17.18 ES Appendix 8.6 (pdf p.12-13).

[92] INQ 61 Applicant's Technical Note dated 27 March 2024 paragraphs 6, and 8-12.

adverse (viewpoints 18 and 21); and at viewpoints 17 and 22 on the Thames Path the bridge cannot be seen.[93]

6.93. Around the Clifton Hampden bypass there will be some significant residual effects, but at moderate adverse level, and again the screening and softening from the planting is effective (viewpoints 31, 34, 36, 36a and 47 at operational year 15).

6.94. Mr James agreed that the methodology of the LVIA was appropriate and that the LVIA was comprehensive.[94] He did not contest the assessments at year 1, but only the year 15 assessments.[95] Nor did he identify any significant effects which were not identified as significant in the LVIA. In respect of the year 15 assessments, he took issue with what he said was the universal downgrading of the level effects between years 1 and 15 (e.g. from large adverse to moderate adverse, or moderate adverse to slight adverse etc.). But Jane Ash explained that this was not in fact a universal approach; the assessment judged that some effects would not reduce sufficiently between years 1 and 15 to drop down a level. Further and in any event, the LVIA judgment that after 15 years the level of effect would generally reduce due to the mitigation planting maturing is plainly a reasonable one, particularly given the extensive mitigation planting proposed.

6.95. The WebTAG assessment Mr James relied on was a 2018 assessment, expressly badged as preliminary, emphasised that it was undertaken at an early stage, and was brief and high level. Mr James relied on the definition of '*moderate adverse*' in TAG guidance but was unable to articulate any material difference between that category of effect in TAG guidance and the LVIA definition of that phrase. In any event, even if there had been a difference, there is no need for a TAG assessment when the LVIA provides a full assessment, the use of an LVIA is in accordance with Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), and the methodology of the LVIA was agreed with both OCC as LPA and the District Council LPAs.

6.96. In respect of the related issue of impact on tree cover, the overall position is that, depending on growth rates, at most a limited amount of net loss is expected, and potentially there could be net gain. In particular, canopy cover lost is anticipated to be around c.121,00sqm; new planting is anticipated to amount to between c.96,000sqm and c.169,000sqm depending on growth rates after 10 years.[96] The average position would therefore be net gain, notwithstanding the introduction of a major infrastructure scheme. As noted in the LPA's officer report, although the County Council's Tree Policy for Oxfordshire seeks an increase of 30% in canopy cover, that is a non-statutory policy and there

[93] CD D.13 The Scheme would provide a new route down to the Thames Path marked on General Arrangement plan sheet 13

[94] Alan James landscape rebuttal paragraph 12

[95] Alan James landscape rebuttal paragraph 3

[96] CD C.2 Appendix H Arboricultural Impact Assessment Addendum, April 2023, paragraph 4.1.5

is no evidence that any additional canopy cover is achievable within the constraints of the land available or necessary in this case.

6.97. Appropriate conditions are agreed to ensure mitigation planting is properly planned and maintained over the long-term, and trees protected.[97] The Applicant is undertaking to provide a £50,000 Landscaping Enhancements Fund for the local community to use more widely, but the Applicant makes clear that it considers that the Inspector and SoS should not place any weight on this matter in determining the application.

6.98. In terms of hedgerows, the Scheme would result in the loss of 5.67km of hedgerows and the creation of 3.84km of hedgerow. However, the vast majority of the hedgerows to be created would be native species rich with trees of high distinctiveness and moderate condition, such that it would have a greater ecological value than what is lost. This results in the assessment finding that there is an overall net gain in hedgerows in biodiversity terms, with a net gain of 40.90% hedgerow units.[98] The construction activity results in the partial loss an important hedgerow (H3) in the Clifton Hampden bypass section of the Scheme, but due to its location and orientation its partial loss is unavoidable and it is compensated for, as set out above. As a result, there is compliance with SOLP ENV2 paragraph 3.

6.99. Overall, there is some conflict with the development plan policies which provide for the protection of the environment, in particular: ENV1 of the SOLP; and CP44 of the VWHLPP1. As concluded by Mr Greep , however, the scale of that conflict is relatively modest, and as will be set out below, it plainly does not preclude compliance with the development plan overall, and the adverse landscape and visual effects are significantly outweighed by the benefits of the Scheme.[99]

Issue 6: whether the proposal would be acceptable in terms of impacts on noise

6.100. The evidence shows that the Scheme would be positively and significantly beneficial, rerouting traffic away from villages and improving the noise environment for residents, particularly when looking ahead to the significant increase in movements which will arise from the extensive planned growth in the area.

6.101. The Scheme effects in respect of noise and vibration have been fully assessed within the ES, in accordance with relevant DMRB guidance.[100] The study area for construction noise focuses on 21 potentially sensitive receptors including those closest to the Scheme construction works, and

[97] CD Q.1 Conditions 3 (CEMP), 11 (LEMP), 22 (landscaping), 23 (tree survey), 24 (arboriculture method statement), 32 (compensatory tree planting scheme)

[98] CD C.2 Appendix 1 See Tables 5, 8, 13 and 15, and section 4 (conclusion) of the revised Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (April 2023)

[99] Proof paras 3.2.3 – 3.3.24.

[100] CD C.1 Annex 4

for operational noise includes an area within 600m of the Scheme and existing routes bypassed by the Scheme, plus 600m either side of the two identified affected routes.[101]

6.102. *Construction Impacts*, There are some significant adverse daytime construction noise effects identified at the closest receptors to the construction works on the existing A4130, the existing minor access road between the A4130 on the northern edge of Didcot and the southern edge of Appleford, close to the CSC, and the north-east edge of Clifton Hampden. Significant evening and night-time construction noise effects relate to tie-in works and bridge works at the new Didcot Science Bridge and Appleford rail sidings bridge. However, the duration of the evening and night-time tie-in works and works at the two new bridges over railways is limited.

6.103. Although some significant adverse effects will remain, the effects will be mitigated by the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will incorporate a specific Noise and Vibration Management Plan (NVMP). The NVMP will include relevant noise criteria, proposed surveys, a range of Best Practicable Means to be adopted, and specific localised mitigation such as temporary site hoardings or noise barriers, with the aim of avoiding significant adverse effects and mitigating and minimising adverse effects. No significant adverse effects are anticipated due to construction traffic noise. Noise policy in the NPPF and NPSE provides that significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life should be avoided, and other adverse impacts should be mitigated and minimised. The significant adverse effects only occur at a small number of individual receptors or groups of receptors and will be temporary. The NPSE policy expressly requires noise to be considered in the context of sustainable development, and in that context these impacts cannot be said to lead to conflict with policy.

6.104. *Operation* The Scheme is anticipated to result in reductions in traffic noise levels along existing roads that are bypassed by the Scheme, including through the villages of Sutton Courtenay, Culham, Appleford, Long Wittenham, Clifton Hampden and Burcot. Overall, far more properties experience a reduction in traffic noise levels than an increase. In particular:

a. 1,862 residential properties predicted to experience a minor, moderate or major decrease in the short term (341 in the long term) compared with 187 experiencing an increase (181 in the long term), based on the façade with the greatest magnitude of change.

b. A sensitivity test indicates that low noise road surfacing, in the sections around Appleford and Clifton Hampden, is likely to reduce the increases further.[102]

[101] CD C.1 Annex 4 Figure 10.1

[102] CD C.1 Annex 4 paragraphs 10.10.30 & 10.10.36

c. At 746 residential properties which are close to the roads in these areas, a significant beneficial effect has been identified. Significant beneficial effects are also identified at 10 non-residential sensitive receptors. This is compared with 38 residential properties and one non-residential sensitive receptor at which a significant adverse effect has been identified. [103]

d. ES Figures 10.5 and 10.6 illustrate how the Scheme shifts existing traffic noise, and traffic noise anticipated due to the planned growth in the area, away from villages.[104]

6.105. Two residential properties have been identified as potentially qualifying for noise insulation works under the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975: Hill Farm and Hartwright House. The Scheme follows the alignment of the existing access route to the properties. Mitigation in the form of low noise surfacing is included in the Scheme here. In this area, the speeds are below the 75 km/hr cut off adopted in the DMRB LA 111 methodology for assuming a benefit from low noise surfacing. The sensitivity test to estimate the likely benefit of low noise surfacing indicates some reduction in traffic noise levels is likely, albeit this will not be sufficient to remove qualification for noise insulation.[105]

6.106. In addition to the low noise surfacing proposed on various stretches of the Scheme, and the design mitigation of a road which routes traffic away from settlements, noise barriers have been included: a 2.5m / 3m noise barrier on the east side of the Scheme as it passes the southern end of Appleford, including over the Appleford Sidings Bridge; a 1.5m solid parapet on the east side of the Thames river crossing bridge; a 3m noise barrier on the south side of the Scheme as it passes Fullamoor Cottages; and a 3m noise barrier on the south side of the Scheme as it passes Clifton Hampden. These were developed in conjunction with the Scheme's landscape architect to achieve a balance of impacts in respect of noise and landscape/visual considerations.[106]

6.107. In terms of policy compliance with the NPPF and NPSE, many properties will experience noise levels above the SOAEL with or without the Scheme. However, the number of residential buildings above the SOAEL is considerably lower with the Scheme both in 2024 and 2039 than without. Accordingly, the Scheme reduces SOAEL impacts overall. Further :

a. Comparing the 2024 with and without Scheme positions, there are only 11 residential buildings anticipated to experience an increase in traffic noise which takes them from below the SOAEL to above the SOAEL. These are all located on existing roads, not close to the

[103] Andrew Pagett proof paragraphs 2.17 – 2.20
[104] CD C.1 Figure 10.5 (short term change in traffic noise levels 2024 do-minimum to 2024 do-something) and Figure 10.6 (long term change in traffic noise levels 2024 do-minimum to 2039 do-something)
[105] Andrew Pagett POE paragraph 2.22.
[106] CD C.1 Annex 4 paragraph 10.9.13 and CD A.16 Figure 10.1

Scheme, predominately on the A4130 along the northern edge of Didcot where the magnitude of the increase is negligible. The introduction of noise mitigation measures such as noise barriers along existing roads away from the Scheme to mitigate slight (non-significant) increases in traffic noise at a small number of properties is not considered to be in line with the principle of sustainable development.

b. In terms of the future position, no 'without Scheme' results are available for 2039 because the traffic model results in gridlock. Accordingly, although the increase in traffic flows from new development results in an overall increase of 61 in the number of residential buildings above the SOAEL in the with Scheme 2039 scenario compared to the with Scheme 2024 scenario, it is not possible to confirm how many of these would have occurred anyway without the Scheme. However:

i. The majority are located away from the Scheme mainly in Didcot and Sutton Courtenay and are, therefore, not directly related to the Scheme.

ii. A small number are located on the B4015 between the Scheme and the A4074 (Rough Lodge and Golden Balls), which is anticipated to undergo a significant increase in traffic due to housing growth in the future year only, increasing traffic noise levels to slightly over the SOAEL. Noise barriers are not considered to be a sustainable option at these properties as the effect is limited to a small number of individual properties remote from the Scheme and the increase in traffic noise is due to anticipated traffic growth on the B4015 from other developments in the area, therefore mitigation within the Scheme design would not change the impact at these properties.

iii. Two are located on the Scheme between Didcot and Appleford (Hill Farm and Hartwright House). In this area the speed limit is 30 mph, and a lower speed limit is not considered practicable. Low noise surfacing has been included on this section of the Scheme. Barriers are not considered to be a practicable option due to the need to maintain access into the properties.

6.108. Various points raised by objectors in respect of noise provide no basis to go behind these conclusions. Mr Pagett's proof and rebuttal deal with them in turn and comprehensively, and it is important to note that no expert noise evidence has been adduced by any objector. As to certain points of objection which were prominent in the objectors' cases, the position is as follows:

a. In terms of impacts on properties in Appleford:

i. No new exceedances of the SOAEL due to the Scheme are identified within Appleford. The first aim of NPSE policy is therefore complied with.

ii. 79 properties in Appleford are identified as experiencing a likely significant beneficial effect due to a reduction in traffic noise levels on the B4016 Main Road.

iii. 19 properties at the south end of Appleford, and a standalone property to the south of the village, are identified as experiencing a likely significant adverse effect due to increases in traffic noise levels on west elevations (facing the Scheme). This reflects a conservative approach as many of these properties are predicted to experience benefits of a similar magnitude on the east elevation (facing the B4016 Main Road). Mitigation in the form of low noise surfacing on the Scheme and a 3-metre barrier along the Scheme is proposed in the vicinity of this location. Additional mitigation options were explored, but in the context of sustainable development these were not considered appropriate. Increasing the barrier height to 4 metres was considered but 3 metres was concluded to be an appropriate balance between noise and landscape/visual impacts, noting that the additional benefit of a 4-metre barrier is limited at to around 1 dB. Extending the barrier northwards or southwards would not provide appreciable additional noise benefits. The speed limit on this section of the Scheme is 50 mph and a reduction would not support achievement of the Scheme objectives. In this location a '*false cutting*' is not feasible due to the landfill site and the vertical clearance required at the rail sidings. On the basis of the above, no additional mitigation, beyond that included in the Scheme, is considered appropriate in this location in the context of sustainable development, and the requirements of the second aim of NPSE are therefore met.[107]

b. The Noise Important Area (NIA) referred to by objectors comprises only one building on Main Road which is the closest to the rail sidings, and the NIA relates to rail noise only. It is the rail operator's duty (not the highway authority's) to address noise levels in this NIA.[108]

c. As to Nuneham Courtenay, the village sits outside of the defined study area for the detailed operational traffic noise predictions. However, all links in the traffic model are considered as part of the assessment, initially using a spreadsheet calculation looking at the 'Basic Noise Level' (BNL), to identify affected routes. The BNL change on the A4074 south of Nuneham Courtenay was negligible, and therefore these links were not identified as affected routes. Nuneham Courtenay was not considered further in the assessment as no

[107] Mr Pagett POE paragraphs 3.2 – 3.7.

[108] In accordance with paragraph 3.1 of the Defra Noise Action Plan: Railways (2019): see Mr Pagett's POE paragraphs 3.10 – 3.11.

potential for significant adverse traffic noise effects was identified in this location.[109] The HIF1 traffic flows at Nuneham Courtenay at 2024 and 2034 are 2% and 6% above the corresponding without scheme traffic flows respectively. Ms Scott explained that if all other factors are unchanged a 25% increase in traffic flow was generally required to cause a 1dB increase in noise, which is the boundary between a negligible and minor impact. A doubling in traffic flows is generally required to cause a 3dB increase, which is needed for the increase to be perceptible. Therefore, the impact at Nuneham Courteney is well below any conceivable noise impact.

d. In respect of any contribution to noise due to vehicles needing to accelerate up the Appleford Sidings Bridge, vehicle speed and road gradient are included in the in Calculation of Road Traffic Noise (CRTN) prediction methodology. Also, the bridge at Appleford is part of a longer embankment rather than a sudden increase and decrease in height, such that the specific noise contribution of vehicles accelerating and decelerating in this area is unlikely to be a notable contribution to the noise impact of the Scheme.[110]

e. As to Mr Hancock's concern about the Appleford Sidings Bridge amplifying noise due to a supposed 'tunnel effect', Ms Scott confirmed that a much longer tunnel would be needed to create any significant effect. What is proposed is a bridge, not a tunnel. She further explained that the sides are not solid but columns holding a roof, which again would minimise any effect.

f. As to Dr Jones's concern about Appleford being downwind from the Appleford Sidings Bridge, the prediction method in CRTN assumes noise propagation consistent with moderately adverse wind velocities and directions, such that traffic noise being worse downwind is already accounted for in the prediction method. The 3D alignment of the Scheme is also included within the computer model of the Scheme.[111]

g. As to Dr Jones' concern about suggested increased Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) use of the Appleford Sidings Bridge, Ms Currie's rebuttal confirms that the traffic modelling takes account of HGV movements.[112] The traffic noise predictions likewise include the percentage of HGVs. Further it should be noted that the aggregate (Heidelberg) and waste (FCC) operators to the west of the Appleford Sidings Bridge are subject to routeing agreements in their planning permissions, which mean that they are obliged to route their HGV movements south to the Didcot perimeter road then onto the A4130 to the A34, other than in respect of local deliveries. The Scheme will not change that, so it is incorrect to suggest that the Scheme heading north will become a principal new route for HGVs from those sites. The

[109] Mr Pagett POE paragraph 3.20.
[110] Mr Pagett POE paragraph 3.38
[111] Mr Pagett rebuttal paragraph 4.6.
[112] Ms Currie rebuttal paragraphs 3.6 – 3.8.

presence of the Scheme on an embankment will also offer some screening to Appleford from the existing noise sources from these industrial sites to the west. Contrary to objectors' concerns, the noise barrier will not reflect rail noise back to Appleford properties, because the noise barrier will sit atop an embankment at this point, at a higher elevation than both the railway and the houses, such that noise from rail traffic will be reflected upwards, rather than towards the properties.[113]

6.109. The points raised by objectors do not detract from the clear conclusion that there is compliance with noise policy in this case, and the fact that, notwithstanding some recognised adverse effects, overall the Scheme is significantly positive in taking traffic away from residential receptors and significantly reducing the numbers of properties exposed to higher levels of traffic noise.

Issue 7: Whether the proposal would be acceptable in terms of air quality

6.110. Scheme effects in respect of air quality have been fully assessed within the ES . The assessment considered impacts during the construction and operation of the Scheme, in accordance with the methodology and guidance set out in DMRB LA105 Air Quality and technical guidance issued by Defra (LAQM.TG16). The detailed modelling study area focused on those roads that exceed one or more of the traffic screening criteria set out in DMRB LA105. Model predictions were made at selected receptors located within 200m of the road network. The study area for the construction dust assessment considered all sensitive receptors within 200m of identified construction activities.

6.111. In respect of construction, the assessment found that any potential dust effects will be mitigated by the application of the mitigation measures set out in the CEMP and implemented by the construction contractor, with the CEMP incorporating a Dust Management Plan. With those measures, significant air quality effects during the Scheme construction phase will be avoided. The changes in concentrations due to emissions from additional traffic flows associated with the construction phase are expected to be imperceptible at all selected public exposure receptors.[114]

6.112. In respect of operational air quality, no receptors are predicted to experience an exceedance of the relevant UK objective for annual mean NO_2, PM_{10} or $PM_{2.5}$, therefore no likely significant air quality effects are predicted. Additionally, the compliance risk assessment indicates that Scheme operation would not influence the UK's ability to comply with the Air Quality Directive. Overall, there are not anticipated to be any likely significant air quality effects. The more recent NO_2 monitoring data published since the ES assessment shows air quality continues to improve in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts. In

[113] Mr Pagett POE paragraph. 3.52

[114] CD A.15.6 Paragraphs 6.12.1 – 6.12.2

addition, a sensitivity test has been conducted to re-run the air quality models in light of updates by Defra and National Highways to their modelling tools, which shows similar result to those in the ES.[115]

6.113. As such, the Scheme is compliant with planning policy on air quality in the NPPF (paragraph 192) and the development plan.[116] The LPA, SODC and VWHDC also have no objection.

6.114. As to certain points of objection which were prominent in the objectors' evidence to the Inquiry, the position is as follows:

a. In respect of impacts in Appleford, Ms Savage has explained that the overall conclusion of the Chapter 6 of the ES is that concentrations of local air quality pollutants are below the objectives and air quality is good across the study area, including in Appleford. Within the village of Appleford, the air quality assessment predicted that there would be improvements in NO_2 concentrations at residential properties close to the Main Road due to the Scheme, with some increases in concentrations predicted at properties near the railway line such as Hill Farm.[117] Overall, as pollutant concentrations are low, none of these impacts were considered significant. The improvements in concentrations predicted at properties along the Main Road are primarily because traffic levels are predicted to reduce along this road.

b. As to air quality concerns related to the Appleford Sidings Bridge being raised, the assessment was conducted at ground level which is standard practice, accords with DMRB LA105 and is considered to provide a worst-case scenario. A sensitivity test was modelled at an elevation of 5m and 10m and reported in AECOM's response of 27 October 2022, which showed that if the road was modelled at height, pollutant concentrations at the properties nearest to the Scheme would be lower due to greater dispersion from vehicle emissions.[118]

c. As to concerns about the gradient of the Appleford Sidings Bridge affecting air quality emissions, Ms Savage gave her expert view based on experience that in so far as there may be an increase in emissions accelerating uphill, this is generally balanced out by a reduction in emissions decelerating downhill, resulting in a neutral overall impact. The relatively shallow gradient at a maximum of c.4% in the present case further confirms this.

d. As to Dr Jones's concerns about Appleford being downwind from the Scheme, the prevailing wind direction in the meteorological data that

[115] Anna Savage POE paragraphs. 2.48 – 2.49.
[116] CD G.2.7 VHWLPP2 Development Policies 23 & 26; CDG.1 SOLP Policies EP1, ENV12 and DES6
[117] CD A.17.9 Appendix 6.2 paragraphs 1.2.12 and 1.2.13. The receptor locations are shown on and CD A.16.3 Figure 6.2 (air quality receptors – operational assessment)
[118] Anna Savage POE paragraph 3.29; CD B.2 Appendix S: Aecom Memo – Appleford Parish Council – Air Quality Comments Response, 27 October 2022, at Appendix A Modelling Sensitivity Tests

was used in the air quality model was from the southwest, so the assessment has taken account of Dr Jones's concern.[119]

e. As to concerns about PM2.5:

i. At the time of the ES, the assessment of PM2.5 was not a requirement of DMRB LA 105, because the UK currently meets its legal requirements for the achievement of the PM2.5 air quality objective of 25µg/m3. In any event, the ES assessment utilised the modelling of PM10 to demonstrate that the Scheme does not impact on the PM2.5 air quality objective.

ii. Subsequently, in January 2023 a new annual mean target for PM2.5 of 10µg/m3 by 2040 was set with an interim target set in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 of 12µg/m3 by the end of January 2028.[120], Updates to Defra's Vehicle Emissions Factors Toolkit and to National Highways' modelling tools were issued in 2023 and 2024 respectively. The new modelling tools included the ability to model PM2.5 for the first time, and an updated model run showed PM2.5 concentrations are below the interim target and will be below the national target (to be met at monitoring sites) by the required date of 2040. In fact, monitoring in the wider area is below the new objective and predicted levels at 2024 with the Scheme in place are either already compliant or close to the new objective at all modelled receptors.[121]

f. As to concerns about Abingdon and Nuneham Courtenay, the air quality assessment has used the flows that the traffic model provided and, although this did not include roads within Abingdon or Nuneham Courtenay, it did include traffic flows on the A415 from Culham to Abingdon and on the A4074 south of Nuneham Courtenay. As part of the air quality assessment, changes in traffic flow and speed on this road were compared against the traffic scoping criteria in DMRB LA105 guidance. As the traffic changes anticipated due to the Scheme were small and below the criteria, the air quality impacts on this road were scoped out of the assessment. Based on the fact that these criteria were not exceeded, this would mean that any change in pollutant concentrations due to traffic changes would be imperceptible. Further, measured concentrations of NO_2 continue to decline within the Abingdon AQMA. The latest data from SODC and VoWHDC show that there has been compliance with the annual mean objective within the AQMA for the last three years. The Council does not monitor in Nuneham Courtenay but measured levels in villages within both districts and background levels are below objectives. This shows that local air quality in the area including in Abingdon and Nuneham

[119] Anna Savage rebuttal paragraphs 3.8 – 3.9
[120] Environmental Targets (Fine Particulate Matter) (England) Regulations 2023.
[121] Anna Savage POE paragraphs 2.49 and 3.49.

Courtenay is improving and overall is considered to be generally good.[122]

6.115. Overall, the position in respect of air quality is, again, a positive one. Air quality is generally good in the area. All pollutants are well below objective values. For example, the highest predicted annual mean NO_2 concentration at an existing property is 24.5µg/m3, which is well below the 40µg/m3 annual mean air quality objective value. No exceedances are predicted. The Scheme results in some reductions and some increases, but given the existing and future baseline, none of the effects will be significant.

Issue 7A: Health

6.116. Impacts on health have been properly assessed and reported, as now agreed by the LPA. As explained by Mr Maddox, prior to the adoption of the LTCP in 2022 after submission of the application in 2021, there was no requirement for a separate Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to be undertaken for major infrastructure schemes. However, the relevant chapters in the ES Environmental Statement – in particular on population and human health (ch. 13), air quality (ch. 6), landscape and visual impact (ch. 8), and noise and vibration (ch. 10) – provide all necessary information for an assessment of the impacts of the Scheme on health and wellbeing. For schemes above the EIA threshold, the ES can plainly serve the function of a HIA, unlike schemes below the threshold where a standalone HIA will be needed. Guidance from Public Health England explains that it can be appropriate to integrate HIA within EIA.[123] The adequacy of the ES in respect of health has been specifically agreed by the public health officers.[124] A Rapid Health Impact Assessment Review Checklist was also produced in September 2023 to provide a detailed routemap showing how health matters have been considered, signposting to locations in the application documents where this has been undertaken.[125]

6.117. Dr Jones's evidence on health did not provide any detailed critique of the Applicant's evidence, and largely relied on the noise and air quality evidence from Mr Hancock, which as set out above provides no proper basis to object to the Scheme. Dr Jones's suggestion that consideration of alternatives may not have taken account of health impacts was incorrect. The optioneering process had regard to the full range of environmental considerations, including noise, air quality, and access to recreation, along with scope for active travel by walking and cycling, which are the key health considerations relied on by Dr Jones. Mr

[122] Anna Savage POE paragraphs 3.52 – 3.53.
[123] INQ 64 Health Impact Assessment in Spatial Planning, Public Health England, October 2020 at paragraph 2.11; section 6; and Appendix 8.
[124] Mr Maddox POE Appendix AM2.7: consultation response dated 20 January 2023 from Healthy Place Shaping Team. NB although AM2.7 states that this was from SODC and VWHDC, in fact the public health officers are officers at OCC, as Mr Maddox clarified in evidence in chief.
[125] Mr Maddox POEf paragraph 4.6, and appendix AM2.6.

Hancock's suggestion that ES Chapter 13 – Population and Human Health is deficient in failing to consider impacts on residents in settlements along the route of the Scheme is plainly incorrect: effects for residents of those settlements are considered extensively in this chapter and the related noise and air quality chapters of the ES, as explained by Mr Maddox.[126]

6.118. Overall, it is clear that the Scheme is positive in terms of health effects.

Issue 8: The effect of the proposal on climate change and carbon emissions

6.119. The effect of the proposal on climate change and carbon emissions has been fully and properly considered in ES Chapter 15 – Climate, which assesses the effects on the climate of greenhouse gases (GHGs) arising from the construction and operation of the Scheme.

6.120. The assessment shows that GHG effects during the Scheme construction phase (including the embodied carbon in construction materials) are predicted to be minor adverse and therefore not significant. During operation the Scheme is shown to reduce GHG emissions compared to the without the Scheme scenario. Therefore, the Scheme is predicted to have a minor beneficial effect in respect of GHG emissions during the operational phase. The reduction in GHG emissions with the Scheme in operation is due to a reduction in congestion and journey times resulting from the improvements to the road network.[127]

6.121. Significance is determined by contextualising the emissions by reference to the UK carbon budgets, with a level of less than 1% of the carbon budget not considered to be significant. The Scheme's contribution to the UK's 4th carbon budget (for 2023 – 2027) is 0.0077%, comprising 154,842t CO2e for construction and -4,601t CO2e for operation (i.e. a reduction for operation compared with the do-nothing baseline). For the 5th (2028 – 2032) and 6th (2033 – 2037) budgets, there is no construction contribution as the Scheme is built, and the operational emissions are again reduced, such that the Scheme does not contribute at all to the UK carbon budget and creates some headroom.[128]

6.122. Since the ES was produced, the DfT have updated the Emissions Factors Toolkit (EFT). The Applicant has conducted a sensitivity analysis, which shows that the EFT v12 update has only a very slight impact on the assessment presented in the ES.[129] The position remains, in accordance with the conclusions of the ES, that there is a minor adverse impact

[126] Mr Maddox rebuttal section 4.
[127] CD A.15.15 paragraph 15.10.11
[128] CD A.15.15 Tables 15.15, 15.16 & 15.17
[129] INQ 55 Technical Note – Didcot Garden HIF1 – Road user emissions update since the environmental statement – 21 March 2024

during construction and a minor beneficial impact during operation, and there are no likely significant effects.

6.123. The objectors have observed that these emission figures are dependent on the outputs of the traffic modelling, which is correct, but as explained above the traffic modelling is robust so this point goes nowhere. Indeed, even if the actual figures varied from those modelled (which is not predicted), the contributions to the UK carbon budget are so small that it would plainly make no difference to the assessment of significance in respect of GHG emissions.

6.124. The National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS) is not directly applicable in this case, given that the Scheme is not being determined under the 2008 Planning Act regime. The NNNPS explains, however, that it may be a material consideration for other consenting routes, including the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 under which the Scheme is being determined. At paragraph 5.42, it provides:

> "*Operational emissions will be addressed in a managed, economy wide manner, to ensure consistency with carbon budgets, net zero and our international climate commitments. Therefore, approval of schemes with residual carbon emissions is allowable and can be consistent with meeting net zero. However, where the increase in carbon emissions resulting from the proposed scheme are so significant that it would have a material impact on the ability of government to achieve its statutory carbon budgets, the Secretary of State should refuse consent."*

6.125. That clearly accords with, and supports, the Applicant's approach. The HIF1 Scheme, in accordance with that policy, will not result in an increase in carbon emissions which is so significant that it would have a material impact on the ability of the government to achieve its statutory carbon budgets.

6.126. Government policy on decarbonising the transport sector is contained in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. It will be achieved in large part through non-planning measures. The strategy includes measures such banning the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2035, promoting walking and cycling, and bringing forward zero-emission buses. It is not government policy for there to be a moratorium or review of all road-building schemes. In its response to the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) 2023 Annual Progress Report to Parliament (October 2023), the Government did not accept the CCC's recommendation to conduct a review of current and future road-building projects, and instead explained that environmental assessment of individual road projects would "*allow consenting authorities to assess the project's consistency with the Government's goals and legislation*".[130] The relevant legislative obligations are in the Climate Change Act 2008, which provide for the

[130] INQ 46 R2023-148 at pdf p.184-185

setting of carbon budgets and require the SoS to ensure that the budget is not exceeded.

6.127. Various objectors have referred to the Paris Agreement, but the Climate Change Act 2008 and the delegated legislation by which the carbon budgets are set is the UK's mechanism for complying with its obligations under the Paris Agreement. For that reason, it is incorrect to suggest that the Scheme is in conflict with the Paris Agreement.

6.128. The Government's Response to the Transport Select Committee's Report on the draft revised NNNPS further re-iterated the points made in response to the CCC's Annual Progress Report to Parliament.[131]

6.129. The objectors' focus on local carbon budgets is misplaced, for several reasons.

a. Local carbon budgets have no basis in law or policy, unlike the national carbon budgets. They are an approach proposed by the Tyndall Centre, which is a university-based research organisation.

b. In *Bristol Airport Action Network Co-ordinating Committee v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities [2023] EWHC 171*, a challenge to the Inspectors' decision on the expansion of Bristol Airport where an objector argued that GHG emissions should be judged against the Tyndall Centre local carbon budget for North Somerset Council area, the High Court stated (paragraph 171):

> *"Applying these principles, I am in no doubt that the Panel did not act irrationally in giving the issue of local carbon budgets no weight, on the ground that such budgets have no basis either in law or in policy. They plainly have no basis in law. Contrary to [Counsel for the Claimant]'s submission, the fact that they have no basis in policy is significant, given that, in the planning field, we are concerned with decision-making which is intensely concerned with matters of policy*."

c. Assessment against UK national carbon budgets has been confirmed as lawful by the High Court. In *R (Boswell) v Secretary of State for Transport [2023] EWHC 1710,* the Court stated (paragraph 6(v)):

> "*Recent caselaw confirms that, on the basis of current policy and law, it is permissible for a decision maker to look at the scale of carbon emissions relative to a national target. The proposition that the impact of carbon emissions is not limited to a geographical boundary is a scientific assessment to which the Court should afford respect."* [132]

[131] INQ 47 See response to Recommendation 2

[132] The High Court judgment in the Boswell case has been upheld by the Court of Appeal: [2024] EWCA Civ 145.

d. Road user emissions are cross-boundary given the mobile nature of vehicles, as are construction emissions (in that construction materials may be sourced and transported from other areas). The impact of emissions is also not limited to a geographical boundary, as observed in Boswell. That all supports the use of national rather than local carbon budgets.

e. The CCC in its document '*Local Authorities and the 6th Carbon Budget*' likewise advises:

> "*The CCC encourages local authorities to develop plans consistent with the Sixth Carbon Budget and the local pathway towards Net Zero. But it does not recommend setting local carbon budgets due to multiple drivers of emissions beyond local control.*" [133]

f. LTCP Policy 27 provides that "*We will … b. take into account embodied, operational and user emissions when assessing a potential infrastructure project and its contribution to Oxfordshire's carbon budget and to a net-zero transport network by 2040*". But no local carbon budget has been set for Oxfordshire pursuant to this policy, such that it provides nothing to assess against. The LTCP also supports and seeks to be aligned with the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.[134]

6.130. Mr Ng's evidence provides no basis for disagreeing with the above approach. In particular:

a. Mr Ng sought to compare emissions from the Scheme against what he referred to as a carbon budget for Oxfordshire from the Tyndall Centre. That exercise is inappropriate in principle for the reasons set out above.

b. The exercise is also flawed because the Tyndall Centre budget is an energy-only budget, which does not include transport sector emissions (so far as the Applicant understands, and Mr Ng was unable to provide any clear evidence to the contrary).

c. Further, the Applicant's consultants spoke to Dr Chris Jones from the Tyndall Centre in May 2022 to discuss the use of the Tyndall Centre budgets for contextualising the GHG impact of infrastructure schemes and Dr Jones confirmed the budgets are not appropriate for this purpose.[135]

d. Mr Ng starts his trajectory in 2020, such that the trajectory is only not met because of the 2021 pandemic year, which was an anomalous year as he accepted.[136] If the trajectory had been started earlier (in accordance with what is standard carbon accounting practice), in 2019, then there would be no departure from the trajectory.

[133] INQ 45 Side-text on pdf p.47
[134] CD G.4 p 27-29
[135] Chris Landsburgh rebuttal para 3.13.
[136] Cross-examination by Mr Humphries KC (day 9, 26 March 2024). See Mr Ng proof fig. 1, p.2.

e. Finally, Mr Ng's calculations expressly and heavily rely on the assumption that the Scheme will give rise to induced traffic.[137] That is flawed. Mr Ng stated that he based his assumptions as to induced traffic on research by the Transport for Quality of Life organisation concerning 63 schemes. Mr Landsburgh however explained that these schemes comprised a wide range of projects, including motorways and tunnels, many of which were not at all comparable to the HIF1 Scheme, and a number were old (including over 12 years old) . For the HIF1 Scheme, on the other hand, there is scheme-specific modelling data which robustly shows that induced traffic is not anticipated. That evidence is plainly to be preferred to the generalised data including from very different types of project which Mr Ng has used.

6.131. Mitigation measures have been embedded into the Scheme design to minimise the effects of carbon emissions. These include design enhancements, more efficient construction processes, and a focus on reuse of materials and waste reduction. These mitigation measures are secured through their inclusion in the CEMP and the Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP), which will be included within the CEMP. GHG mitigation measures include energy-efficient road lighting design and encouraging low-carbon forms of transport through the construction of the shared cycleways / footways. In addition, a carbon management plan (CMP) is required by condition to support carbon reductions, by quantifying emissions, setting targets, monitoring and reporting.

6.132. Overall, there will be no significant climate effects during construction or operation, and operation will have a minor beneficial effect due to a reduction in congestion and journey times resulting from the improvements to the road network. There is compliance with policy and no conflict with domestic or international commitments under the Climate Change Act 2008 or Paris Agreement respectively. It is government policy to address emissions in a managed, economy-wide manner, and not for there to be a moratorium or review of all road-building schemes.

Issue 9: Whether the proposed bridge would deliver the high-quality design sought by the NPPF and development plan policies

6.133. As explained by Mr Blanchard in his written and oral evidence, the design of the Didcot Science Bridge involved overcoming a number of engineering constraints which inevitably play a significant role in its final form. In particular the fact that it crosses the electrified Great Western Mainline, and also the need to tie-in to the highway and the developments to the north and south and on the land available. Certain architectural enhancements would be unsuitable for the bridge, largely because they would introduce potential health and safety risks and/or

[137] Mr Ng POE paragraphs 9 – 10.

make carrying out routine structural inspections more challenging. Cost is also a consideration. Inclined abutments with vertical or V-shaped piers might be feasible, but would be more expensive and may make inspections more difficult as they would introduce 'harder-to-reach' areas of the structure, particularly at height. Design policy in the NPPF and the development plan has an emphasis on good design, but plainly does not suggest that these essential practical considerations are unimportant.

6.134. The merits of the aesthetic design of the bridge involve a significant degree of judgement, but the Applicant considers that it will be perceived as a well-designed and attractive structure, in keeping with its surroundings and contributing positively to the Garden Town ambitions of Didcot. The LVIA assessed the views of the Science Bridge at the various viewpoints. It found that the bridge would have no significant adverse impacts, notwithstanding that it is necessarily a large structure.[138] The photomontages for viewpoints 4 and 7 show the bridge to integrate well into its surroundings, and the planting proposed is particularly effective in this respect. In the viewpoint 7 photomontage, the bridge is a positive design feature in a view which is otherwise influenced by very functional industrial and commercial structures.

6.135. There is potential for further design enhancement within the planning permission applied for, as noted by Mr Blanchard. These could include cast-in textures on concrete substructures (i.e., pier columns and abutments); the ends of the pier crossheads could have architectural features on; structure illumination (up-lighting); and the internal faces of the solid bridge parapets could provide a canvas to exhibit artwork, for example contributed by local school children, with a science-led theme.[139] An agreed condition requires details of the external appearance of the bridge (and the Appleford Sidings Bridge and the Thames Bridge and viaduct) to be approved by the County LPA, which will enable any such design enhancements to be secured.

6.136. For these reasons, the design of the Didcot Science Bridge, and the Scheme generally, will accord with design policy in the NPPF and in the development plans. In particular, Policy 16b of the VWH LPP2 expects development to positively contribute to the Didcot Garden Town Masterplan Principles, which include encouraging pioneering architecture (Principle 1).[140] The high-quality design of the Didcot Science Bridge positively contributes to that principle. Principle no.4 seeks a step-change towards active and public transport. The active travel provision across the Didcot Science Bridge and throughout the rest of the Scheme will promote. The Science Bridge will also be a "*recognisable landmark*" in accordance with the DGTDP.

[138] CD A.17.18 Appendix 8.6
[139] Mr Blanchard POE paragraph 3.7
[140] CD G.2.7 p.54-55

Issue 10: The effect of the proposal on biodiversity, including Biodiversity Net Gain and whether a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening should be undertaken for Cothill Fen Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Little Wittenham (SAC)

6.137. The effect of the Scheme on biodiversity was comprehensively considered in ES Chapter 9: Biodiversity, which concluded that there would be no significant residual effects resulting from the construction or operation of the Scheme, with the implementation of mitigation measures. The assessment further concluded that the Scheme is expected to result in a slight positive effect in the medium to long term, once habitats have matured, as a result of the overall biodiversity net gain. The LPA's officers raised no concerns in respect of biodiversity and concluded that:

> "subject to the conditions being included as recommended, the development would be in accordance with development plan and national policies that seek to protect and enhance biodiversity".[141]

In respect of the Inspector's oral question to Mr Greep regarding species relocation, only two species might require relocation: European eel, which would be subject to fish rescue, removal and translocation should this be required during construction; and badger.[142]

6.138. As to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Professor Wade's Technical Note explains that a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment was produced which concluded that the Scheme would achieve a BNG of at least 10%, in compliance with policy.[143] The LPA's officers accepted this conclusion.

6.139. Screening has been undertaken under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations). The screening exercise considered the Cothill Fen SAC and Little Wittenham SAC. The screening concluded that there are no source-receptor pathways by which the Scheme could impact a European Site during the construction or operation of the Scheme and, consequently, there would be no likely significant effects, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.[144] The LPA's officers accepted this conclusion.

6.140. There would be no significant adverse effect on biodiversity in respect of the Bridge Farm Quarry, as explained in the Applicant's Technical Note.[145] The Technical Note also deals with the relationship with the restoration of Bridge Farm Quarry more generally, and draft condition no.27 precludes development within the Didcot to Culham River Crossing

[141] CD F.1 Report to the 17-18 July 2023 meeting of the Planning and Regulatory Committee, paragraph 219 (also see generally paragraphs 205 – 219 on biodiversity)
[142] CD B.1 Annex 5 Table 9.9 (pdf p.260), paragraphs 9.10.30 – 9.10.31, and 9.10.40 – 9.10.41.
[143] Professor Wade's Technical Note dated 30 January 2024 is at Appendix AM2.4 to Mr Maddox's POE. See Section 3
[144] CD B.02 Appendix X paragraph 5.1.1
[145] INQ61 paragraph 13ff

section of the Scheme until revised restoration and aftercare schemes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for Bridge Farm Quarry. Further appropriate conditions are also proposed, as recommended by LPA officers.

6.141. For the above reasons, there is no proper biodiversity reason for refusing planning permission for the Scheme.

Issue 11: The effect of the proposal on the significance of heritage assets

6.142. The effects of the Scheme in respect of heritage assets have been comprehensively assessed in ES Chapter 7 – Cultural Heritage , as supplemented by the Heritage Technical Note by Dr Gillian Scott on behalf of the Applicant, and the Further Heritage Technical Note by Dr Scott dated 9 February 2024.[146] In EIA terms, the assessments concluded that there will be no likely significant effects on any heritage assets, including archaeological assets, historic landscape character, and designated and non-designated built heritage assets. In terms of heritage harm as categorised by NPPF paragraphs 205 – 214, the Scheme will give rise to less than substantial harm only, alongside some heritage benefits.

6.143. In particular:

a. The Scheme will cause less than substantial harm to the Grade I Registered Park and Garden at Nuneham Courtenay and the Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area through change to their settings. This harm is at the low end of less than substantial, due to it being focused in areas that are not within key designed views towards or views from the parkland, or on its approaches. No harm will be caused to the individual listed buildings within these areas.[147] Suggestions by objectors that the Scheme causes harm to Nuneham Courtenay by reason of increased traffic flows are incorrect given that the Scheme will not give rise to increases in traffic volumes through Nuneham Courtenay.[148]

b. In respect of the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area, the construction and presence of the Scheme within the setting of the Conservation Area will have a minor temporary impact, resulting in a slight adverse effect, which is not EIA significant, and which comprises '*less than substantial harm*' at the low end of the scale. The harm will be reversed once screening planting proposed in the landscape masterplans matures. After this point the impact will reduce to negligible, resulting in a neutral effect, which is not EIA significant. Further, by reducing traffic volumes through the Conservation Area, the Scheme will provide a heritage benefit in enhancing understanding

[146] See CD C.1 Annex 3, Appendix BG2.4 Mr Greep's POE and applicant's rebuttal documents

[147] CD C.1 Annex 3 paragraphs 7.10.21 – 7.10.29, 7.10.47, 7.12.3. Dr Scott Heritage Technical Note paras. 2.21 – 2.33 (Appendix BG2.4).

[148] Dr Scott Further Heritage Technical Note dated 9 February 2024, paragraphs 2.1 – 2.3

of the Conservation Area's significance as a rural settlement. This will allow for greater appreciation of its architectural and historic interests, including those of its listed buildings.[149]

c. In respect of the Fullamoor Farmhouse Grade II listed building, the construction and presence of the Scheme will result in a slight adverse effect which is not EIA significant. The Scheme will result in change to the ability to understand the land to the north of Abingdon Road as formerly being part of the farmland associated with the farmhouse, however this is not something that is readily understandable at present due to the previous development of this land firstly as part of the airfield, and subsequently as CSC. In the terms of the NPPF the impact will result in '*less than substantial'* harm to the asset at the low end of the scale.[150]

d. In respect of a Scheduled Monument comprising rectangular enclosures and ditches with scattered pits, the Scheme will maintain the monument's relationship with the River Thames, whilst further enclosing and isolating the monument on the west. As the monument's heritage interest (sensitivity) lies primarily in its archaeological value, the ES assessed the change to its setting from the Scheme as resulting in a slight adverse effect. Even on Historic England's suggestion that the effect is moderate, Historic England still agree that the harm would be less than substantial.[151]

e. Historic England made no objection to the application on heritage grounds, nor did the Conservation Officers for SODC and VWHDC. OCC as LPA concluded that notwithstanding the great weight and importance that is to be attached to the relevant designated heritage assets, the public benefits arising from the development weigh heavily in favour of the development and outweigh the harm to the designated assets, and that the development is in accordance with national and development plan policies that seek to protect and enhance the historic environment. The Applicant agrees with that assessment, taking into account the duties under s.66 (in respect of listed buildings and their settings) and s.72 (in respect of conservation areas) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and considers that the heritage and other benefits firmly outweigh the limited heritage harm arising.

6.144. Insofar as the Scheme does cause 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of any heritage asset, Mr Greep explained in his evidence that the public benefits of the Scheme considerably outweigh such harm for the purposes of NPPF paragraph 208. For the above reasons, there is no heritage reason for refusing planning permission for the Scheme.

[149] Dr Scott Heritage Technical Note, paras 2.41 – 2.16 (Appendix BG2.4).
[150] Dr Scott Heritage Technical Note, paras. 2.52 – 2.57, and 3.1 – 3.6 (Appendix BG2.4).
[151] CD E.2

Issue 12: whether the proposed scheme would be safe from flooding over its lifetime and the effect on flood risk elsewhere (including the arrangements for the management and maintenance of any surface water management features)

6.145. Considerable consultation was undertaken with the Environment Agency (EA) during the production of the flood risk model, the subsequent modelling and reporting, with the EA reviewing all aspects as they were produced. A Flood Risk Assessment was submitted with the application, which concluded that, with mitigation in place, the Scheme will be at low risk of flooding, will be safe for the lifetime of the development and will not increase flood risk elsewhere, allowing for climate change effects. An area of compensatory flood storage on the northern bank of the River Thames (to the west of the proposed road alignment) is proposed, and the Thames crossing has been designed to account for flood water flows and climate change effects. Surface water would be managed through a series of sustainable urban drainage systems made up of swales, filters and drains, and several culverts are also proposed to manage flood waters and flows.

6.146. Further work was subsequently undertaken and clarification provided during the course of the application to address flood risk issues raised by the EA, and the EA withdrew its flood risk objection on 13 March 2023.[152] The Lead Local Flood Authority also raised no objection, and were satisfied with the drainage strategy subject to conditions.[153] OCC as LPA concluded that the Scheme was in accordance with development plan and national policies concerning flooding. Agreed conditions are proposed to deal with these matters.

6.147. For the above reasons, there is no flooding reason for refusing planning permission for the Scheme.

Issue 13: The effect of the proposal on the Green Belt

6.148. The Scheme plainly falls within NPPF para. 155(c). It is local transport infrastructure, in the sense that it is not part of the strategic highway network serving a wider than local need. It also cannot avoid the Green Belt, such that it can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location. All of the land north of the Thames around Culham and Clifton Hampden is Green Belt.[154] It is not possible to cross the river anywhere in this location without entering the Green Belt, nor would it be possible to provide access to the STRAT8 and STRAT9 SOLP allocations, or provide a Clifton Hampden bypass, without doing so. Mr James suggested a completely different strategic alternative to HIF1 – for example one based only on cycling, walking and public transport – might not require development in the Green Belt, but the policy in NPPF

[152] CD E.64
[153] CD E.95
[154] CD A.16.13 Figure 8.8

paragraph 155(c) must be applied to the local transport infrastructure actually proposed.

6.149. In order to come within NPPF paragraph 155, developments must satisfy the proviso that they "*preserve [the Green Belt's] openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it*". The Applicant considers that this proviso needs to be interpreted and applied realistically, so as to recognise that some harm to openness and some conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt will not prevent the proviso applying. If paragraph 155 required no impact at all to openness and Green Belt purposes, that would deprive the policy of almost all its utility, given that all local transport infrastructure will involve operational development and it is difficult to envisage local transport infrastructure that does not result in some impact on openness and Green Belt purposes. That cannot be a sensible or the intended interpretation of the policy. It is also notable that the policy does not say "*fully preserve openness*", or "*avoid any conflict with Green Belt purposes*", or words to that effect. Rather its wording permits and requires the decision-maker to make an overall judgment on whether openness is preserved and conflict with Green Belt purposes is avoided. Some harm is compatible with reaching a positive answer to that question. This is the approach of the SoS: see the Hinxton appeal decision, in which the Inspector found that there was some harm to openness and some conflict with the Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, but found that "*the local transport infrastructure proposed in the Green Belt would not by reason of its nature and scale be sufficient to exceed the threshold set out at paragraph 146 of the Framework"*.[155]

6.150. As to any impact on openness, the spatial and visual aspects of openness need to be considered. The absence of any significant residual effects in landscape terms beyond the site by operational year 15 (as assessed in the LVIA as set out above) indicates that in spatial terms, any impact on openness is limited. There are significant residual effects in visual terms at operational year 15, but these are localised and only rise to large adverse at two viewpoints on the Thames Path where the viewer is close to the Thames Bridge; the other significant residual visual effects in the Green Belt are moderate adverse only.

6.151. This is an area of the Green Belt which is already characterised by transport infrastructure (road and rail) and built development (Clifton Hampden and the Culham Science Centre in particular). Apart from the Thames Bridge, the HIF1 Scheme in the Green Belt will largely comprise an at-grade road, with planting which will soften its impact. The Thames Bridge also maintains movement and views through the structure. Physical extent is also relevant. Of the red line boundary of the Scheme, 38.04 hectares is within the Green Belt, which amounts to only 0.25% of the total Green Belt land across South Oxfordshire District (and of those 38.04 hectares, the permanent land take only amounts to 24.81

[155] Mr Greep Appendix BG2.3c

hectares, which lowers the percentage figure further still); and this is only a proportion of the total Oxford Green Belt which extends across other districts also.[156]

6.152. As to Green Belt purposes in NPPF paragraph 143, there is no conflict with purposes (a), (b) or (e). Nor is there any conflict with (d) since there is no impact on the setting of any historic town, for example Abingdon. Nuneham Courtenay and Clifton Hampden are not '*historic towns'*, and in any event any such harm to their conservation areas is at the low end of less than substantial harm, which would be insufficient to give rise to conflict with purpose (d). Finally, as to purpose (c) ("*to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*"), there is some impact on this purpose given the landscape and visual effects set out above, but it is limited due to the localised nature of those effects and the nature of the Green Belt in this location.[157]

6.153. Overall, in light of all of the above, the Applicant considers that the openness of the Green Belt is preserved and there is no conflict with purposes of including land within in it, such that the Scheme constitutes '*not inappropriate*' development in the Green Belt within the context of NPPF paragraph 155(c).

6.154. If the Inspector or SoS takes the contrary view, such that the Scheme constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt outside the scope of NPPF paragraph 155, then the Applicant considers that very special circumstances clearly exist so as to justify the Scheme and result in there being no conflict with Green Belt policy. These very special circumstances are discussed below as part of the planning balance.

Issue 14: Other policy matters and the overall planning balance

6.155. Although many of the Inspector's issues derive from issues originally raised by OCC as LPA, it should be noted that OCC as LPA no longer objects to the Scheme, either as to the principle or on any technical matters, and at their meeting on 27 September 2023 resolved to adopt "*an overall neutral position*".[158] A supplementary statement of common ground between the LPA and the Applicant dated 9 January 2024 confirms that "The Applicant and the LPA do not have any matters of dispute between them" .

[156] Mr Greep's POE paragraphs 4.2.1 – 4.2.12, including Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

[157] See Mr Greep's POE paragraphs 5.2.8 – 5.2.12 and his oral evidence (day 15, 19 April 2024). To the extent that Ms Ash's written evidence suggested that there might be conflict with purposes (b) and (d), she clarified in oral evidence that there was no such conflict. Although she considered from a landscape and visual point of view that there was some impact on purpose (c), it was limited in scope and localised.

[158] CD F.6 printed minutes of the 27 September 2023 meeting. See also CD Q.1 Statement of Common Ground between the LPA and the Applicant dated 2 November 2023, at paragraph 15

Other policy matters

6.156. Various objectors to the called-in planning application and to the Orders have raised certain challenges to the viability and feasibility of the Scheme. They are without substance. In particular:

6.157. Mr Ng, on behalf of the NPCJC, suggests that an overall inflation allowance of £62m is required, but that is very close to the actual inflation allowance of £59.3m, as at the date of Mr Mann's proof.

6.158. Mr Ng's comments doubting the robustness of OCC's approach to risk were misconceived. Mr Mann explained that OCC has support from commercial and risk managers from AtkinsRealis in the management of the contingency budgets, which includes risk and optimism bias

6.159. Mr Harman's evidence on behalf of the NPCJC raised concerns over deliverability and feasibility of the Scheme was also unsubstantiated. Mr Harman discussed procurement challenges and risks in a generalised way. These will of course be inevitable on an infrastructure project of this scale, but OCC is taking all relevant expert advice, and is also itself an experienced deliverer of highway projects, such that there is no proper basis to doubt the deliverability of the Scheme within the programme and budget (plus contingency if required). In particular, Aecom have been appointed as engineers for the delivery of the feasibility design, preliminary design, planning application, ground investigation and other areas of technical support. Graham Construction Ltd has been appointed to provide construction advice during the preliminary design stage, including on construction methodology and site compound requirements.

6.160. Mr Harman made various assumptions about procurement and contractual matters which do not align with what is actually taking place. In particular, Mr Harman was wrong to suggest that large uncontrolled risks would fall on OCC; as Mr Mann explained, OCC generally has control over risk allocation and this is set out in the tender documentation for contractors.

Very special circumstances

6.161. If, contrary to the Applicant's primary case, it is concluded that the Scheme is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, then the Applicant submits that very special circumstances clearly exist within NPPF paragraph 153.

6.162. The Scheme meets a pressing need and gives rise to numerous and wide-ranging benefits, which individually and cumulatively attract substantial weight. Most significantly, and as set out in detail under Issue 1 (need and benefits), the Scheme enables planned housing and employment growth in the Science Vale to come forward. This is central to the development plan ambitions for the area in the SOLP, VWH LPP1 and VWH LPP2, and Government policy in the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 60, 74 and 85-86 concerning boosting the supply of housing, planning for larger scale development supported by the necessary

infrastructure, supporting economic growth and productivity, and addressing potential barriers to investment including inadequate infrastructure and insufficient housing. There are also further benefits in respect of transport, in particular reducing congestion, improving access to homes and jobs, facilitating better public transport, and providing better infrastructure for active travel; noise and amenity, by diverting existing and future traffic away from villages and settlements, health, due to the noise and active travel benefits, and BNG.

6.163. In terms of harm:

a. In addition to the harm by reason of inappropriateness, there is some harm to Green Belt openness and some harm to the Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, but the harm is relatively localised and limited in scale and level, as set out above.

b. There is some landscape and visual harm, but again it is relatively localised and should not be overstated.

c. There is some less than substantial heritage harm at the low end of the scale.

6.164. This harm is clearly outweighed by the need for and benefits of the Scheme, such that the very special circumstances test in NPPF paragraph 153 is met. Indeed, even if the level of that harm were to be assessed as materially higher than the Applicant's assessment, it would still be outweighed by the need and the benefits, such is their extent and the weight which they attract.

The Secretary of State's matters

6.165. As to the Secretary of State's matters on which he particularly wishes to be informed:

a. The Scheme is entirely consistent with Government policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes in NPPF Chapter 5, for the reasons set out above;

b. The Scheme is entirely consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy in NPPF Chapter 6, for the reasons set out above;

c. The Scheme is in accordance with the development plan overall, for the reasons set out below.

S.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004: accordance with the development plan

6.166. Section 38(6) requires an assessment of whether there is compliance or conflict with the development plan overall. As held in R v Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council ex parte Milne [2001] Env LR 22 by Mr Justice Sullivan (as he then was), it is well-established that development

plan policies may "*pull in different directions*", and the decision-maker must accordingly:

> "make a judgment bearing in mind such factors as the importance of the policies which are complied with or infringed, and the extent of compliance or breach".[159]

The Judge went on to state:

> "… I regard as untenable the proposition that if there is a breach of any one policy in a development plan a proposed development cannot be said to be "in accordance with the plan". Given the numerous conflicting interests that development plans seek to reconcile: the needs for more housing, more employment, more leisure and recreational facilities, for improved transport facilities, the protection of listed buildings and attractive land escapes etc., it would be difficult to find any project of any significance that was wholly in accord with every relevant policy in the development plan".

6.167. In the present case, there is some conflict with the development plan policies which provide for the protection of the environment due to some adverse landscape and visual effects, in particular: ENV1 of the SOLP; and CP44 of the VWH LPP1. That is the extent of the conflict with the development plan (including the District Local Plans and the Culham Neighbourhood Plan). Mr Greep's written evidence comprehensively goes through the relevant policies of the development plan and, for all the reasons already set out only finds this level of conflict.[160] Some conflict in this respect plainly does not preclude compliance with the development plan overall, given the relatively modest nature of the conflict, particularly when seen in the context of the scale of the Scheme as a whole, and the fact that some adverse effects in this respect are likely to be inevitable when delivering infrastructure of this nature and size. The Scheme is also expressly supported in the development plan.

6.168. Accordingly, there is compliance with the development plan overall. Indeed, the Scheme is central to the development plan, which heavily depends upon it. The Scheme therefore benefits from the presumption in favour in s.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The Planning Balance

6.169. There are no material considerations which come close to indicating that the application should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Any adverse environmental effects are heavily outweighed by the benefits; the adverse effects are few and far between and the overall environmental picture is very positive. Overall, this is an important, significantly beneficial and urgently needed Scheme, and the planning balance comes down overwhelmingly in favour of the grant of

[159] Paragraphs 47-50

[160] Mr Greep's proof Section 3.3

permission. That is the case even if the Secretary of State were to find, contrary to the Applicant's case, conflict with the development plan overall. Such conflict would be outweighed by the very weighty need and benefits, such that the planning balance would still mean that permission should be granted.

Conclusion

6.170. For all the above reasons, the Applicant asks that planning permission be granted for the Scheme.

7. The Case for the Oxfordshire County Council (LPA)[161]

[This summary of the case for the Local Planning Authority is based on it Statement of case and other submissions to the Inquiry.]

7.1. Prior to the LPA receiving the SoS's call in letter, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning & Regulation Committee at its meeting on 17th and 18th July 2023, in its capacity as LPA, had considered an officer report with addenda (Annex 1) which recommended approval to the application.

7.2. The Committee gave careful consideration to the application with regard to the development plan and other material considerations including national planning policies and guidance, its own statutory LTCP and non-statutory corporate strategies. The Committee heard deputations against the application from 25 third parties who opposed the application as well as those in support from the applicant. The Committee did not agree with the officer recommendation and resolved to refuse the planning application on 18 July 2023 for eight reasons.

7.3. The LPA was in the process of preparing the formal written decision notice when the SoS's call in letter was received.

7.4. The LPA's Planning & Regulation Committee met on 27 September 2023 to consider an officer report advising the Committee of the SoS's call in and specific matters they wish to be informed about in order to reach a decision on the case the LPA wished to put forward at the Inquiry.

Reason 1 – The Climate Change Committee's June 2023 Report to Parliament had not been properly taken into account in the application

7.5. Overall, the Committee considered that subject to the applicant's commitment, that it would put evidence to the Inquiry that it was committed to conditions being attached to any planning permission granted to secure a carbon management plan and to promote modal shift by seeking to deliver a scheme of bus priority measures to be in place when the road was opened, then a clear improvement would have been secured since the July Committee. Therefore, the Committee would not pursue reason for refusal 1 at the Inquiry, subject to confirming to the Inspector, that any planning permission granted should be subject to a condition to deliver a bus priority scheme and also to a condition requiring the submission, approval and implementation of a carbon management plan to provide further details on emissions and include details of how whole life carbon emissions will be reduced and consider opportunities to reduce emissions associated with the construction phase.

[161] These comments are based on the LPA's Statement of Case (CD L.2)

***Reason 2 – Lack of Very Special Circumstances for the development set against Green Belt Policy*.**

7.6. Very special circumstances have been demonstrated and do exist. The LPA's position is therefore that it does not oppose or in any way object to the application on Green Belt grounds.

***Reason 3 – The impact of traffic on Abingdon and Didcot had not been assessed in the application*.**

7.7. Overall, it was advised that the local planning authority in its Statement of Case did not oppose the application on this point but instead to set out the Committee's concerns with regard to the extent of traffic modelling undertaken by the applicant. It asks that in reaching their recommendation to the SoS, the Inspector only recommend approval if they were satisfied that the traffic modelling carried out had robustly examined the wider traffic impacts beyond the application area and that conditions for the provision of bus prioritisation as set out in the Officer's Report were attached to any planning permission granted by the SoS.

7.8. Following the Pre-Inquiry meeting held on 9 November 2023, Officers commissioned a technical review of the traffic modelling. A note was produced which concluded that it could not support the Committee's concern that the traffic modelling carried out by the applicant had not robustly examined the wider traffic impacts beyond the application area. The Committee noted and did not dispute the findings within this technical review of the transport modelling at its meeting of 15 January 2024. The submitted Technical Note therefore represents the final position of the LPA in respect of the adequacy of the applicant's transport modelling.

Reason 4 – Noise impacts on Appleford

7.9. The concerns raised about noise by the local community are understood. The applicant has proposed two conditions with regard to exploring the possibility of relocating the proposed noise barrier closer to the proposed carriageway adjacent to Appleford Village, by relocating it between the non-motorised user provision and the carriageway and installing noise monitoring equipment at a location in the proximity of Appleford Village for the duration of the construction works of the Didcot to Culham River Crossing.

7.10. It is recognised that there will be some noise impacts arising from the proposal but that overall, whilst these impacts are regrettable, they are outweighed by the benefits of the Scheme. Subject to inclusion of the two proposed conditions in the grant of any planning permission, and the Inspector first being satisfied that the benefits outweigh the harms and that it is necessary therefore to accept them if the spatial strategy is to be delivered and the aims of chapters 5 and 6 of the NPPF are to be met, the LPA does not oppose the proposal in relation to noise.

Reason 5 – The absence of a Health Impact Assessment

7.11. The health impacts of the development had been properly assessed in the documents as part of the ES submitted with the planning application and clarified with the information provided in Annex 5. Therefore, this reason for refusal was not pursued through the Inquiry and resolved instead through the Statement of Common Ground with the applicant.

Reason 6 – The harm to landscape

7.12. The applicant has committed to improvements to the proposed landscape planting. Subject to conditions to secure this additional detail the application is not opposed.

Reason 7 – The Science Bridge was not of adequate design for a gateway feature to Didcot

7.13. The applicant has committed to enhance the design of the Didcot Science Bridge. Subject to the applicant, within the constraints of the Network Rail design requirements, working with the LPA to enhance the design of the bridge during the development of the detailed design for the structure by way of a mutually agreeable planning condition, for consideration by the Inspector, should this be considered necessary, the development is not opposed.

7.14. Following the Pre-Inquiry meeting held on 9th November 2023, the previous inspector requested a note to explain how the LPA considers that the design of the Science Bridge can be enhanced by way of a condition when the proposal is a full application. The provided note clarifies that it is intended that it is only the external appearance aspect of the design of the Science Bridge which is dealt with by condition. The expectation would be that details are submitted of the materials to be used including their colours.

Reason 8 – Conflict with policy of the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022-2050

7.15. Whilst not directly opposing the application on this point, instead to set out the Committee's concerns with regard to how the applicant had approached the traffic modelling for a new road scheme contrary to the policies of the LTCP. It asks in reaching their recommendation to the SoS, the Inspector should only recommend approval to the application if they were satisfied that, the traffic modelling for the Scheme had adopted a 'Decide and Provide' approach. If it was concluded it had not, or had done so inadequately, that this did not outweigh the strong support for the development provided in the development plan and that it was necessary therefore to accept it if the spatial strategy was to be delivered and the aims of chapters 5 and 6 of the NPPF were to be met.

7.16. In the light of the above resolutions the LPA adopts an overall neutral position to the Scheme.

With regard to the matters raised by the SoS:

(a) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 5).

(b) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 6).

7.17. The assessment of the principle of the development was set out in paragraphs 83 to 94 of the July Committee report. Officers concluded that the strategic infrastructure included within the development proposed in the planning application is explicitly identified in the development plan as necessary to deliver the adopted spatial strategy for housing and employment growth in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.

7.18. The LPA's position with regard to informing the SoS with regard to chapters 5 and 6 of the NPPF is that the development proposed in the planning application is consistent in principle with them and there is no dispute that the answer on matters (a) and (b) is that the proposals are consistent with those matters.

(c) The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with the development plan for the area.

7.19. It is clear that the application is supported in principle in the respective development plans for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts and that planned new growth is unlikely to be delivered if the strategic infrastructure proposed is not provided. SODC has stated in their response to the planning application that the proposed development is essential for the delivery of around 3,500 new homes on land adjacent to Culham Science Centre and 1,700 new homes on land at Berinsfield Garden Village. The infrastructure would also support more than 6,000 homes that have been, or will be, delivered in Didcot between 2011 and 2035.

7.20. The VWH District Council has similarly stated that the proposed development would support housing developments at East of Sutton Courtenay, Milton Heights, Valley Park and North West of Valley Park. Both District Councils have stated that the highways infrastructure is essential to enable jobs growth and the delivery of employment sites to support the economic and social prosperity of Science Vale UK, including two enterprise zones. The area is home to one of the largest science-based research and knowledge clusters in western Europe based around Harwell (space sector), the CSC (nuclear fusion) and Milton Park (life sciences). These sites are subject to significant public and private investment and generate thousands of jobs. The two District Councils consider the development to be essential in providing homes for a highly

skilled workforce, and would support employment allocations at CSC, Didcot and Berinsfield in South Oxfordshire, and Didcot Power Station, Harwell Campus and Milton Park in the VWH.

7.21. Oxfordshire County Council acting in its capacity as Local Highway Authority and as statutory consultee to the LPA, has identified the proposed development as the *"cornerstone of mitigation for planned growth in the area"* that would unlock and support the delivery of circa 18,000 new homes (including the circa 3.300 built out at Great Western Park). It is clear then, that the proposed development forms a fundamental part of the adopted spatial strategy for housing and employment growth in both the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts and is essential to the delivery of planned growth across the area. The development would also help to address existing issues on the local highway network, including severe congestion, as it would improve north-south connectivity and thereby ease pressure on existing routes that enable movement across the Great Western Mainline and the River Thames.

7.22. The HIF1 Scheme emerged as the applicant's preferred option following a detailed multi-stage optioneering process, which took place between 2014 and 2021. The alternatives outlined in the ES include other major road schemes, bus and rail improvements, and new technologies including autonomous vehicles. It also considered lower cost options such as traffic management measures, junction re-modelling, and investment in walking and cycling infrastructure. The conclusion was that, whilst some of the options would have lesser environmental effects, only a major road scheme would address the transport issues and requirements of the area.

7.23. The proposal is necessary to unlock the housing and employment growth envisaged in the relevant development plans. Both local plans assume the delivery of it. Much of the development in those areas cannot come forward without it. The strategies of the local plans are thus predicated on the delivery of it. The soundness of those plans has been tested. It is considered that in strategic terms the proposed development is necessarily consistent with the development plan for the area.

7.24. The LPA consider that it is therefore necessary to focus on the details of the proposed development and whether those are consistent with the development plan for the area rather than on the principle of the proposals in order to reach its position on matter (c).

8. The Case for the Vale of the White Horse District Council (Rule 6 Party)

[This summary of the case for the Vale of the White Horse District Council is based on the closing submissions, the proofs of evidence and other submissions to the Inquiry.]

8.1. Most of the development that would take place within VWHDC is on land that is allocated or safeguarded in the adopted development plan and in the emerging JLP. VWHDC strongly supports the principle of development.

8.2. The Council's decision to support this scheme has not been an ad-hoc decision taken lightly or indeed under pressure (as is suggested by some objectors). There are a number of reasons why this contention is misplaced:

a. This scheme has had support for years. It is in the Council's LPP1 (dated 2016).

b. The Council's housing and employment strategies embedded in the LPP1 and LPP2 depend on and are underpinned by the HIF1 scheme.

c. The Council has supported the Application throughout this Inquiry – it has called two witnesses and taken an active part.

d. Ms Baker told the Inquiry she knows "*nothing at all*" about any pressure placed on VWHDC.

The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with the development plan for the area (the Third Matter identified by the SoS)

The statutory development plan and the weight to policies

8.3. This Council benefits from a recent development plan. LPP1 (setting out the spatial strategy, strategic policies and locations for housing and employment) was adopted in December 2016 and LPP2 (sets out policies and further locations for housing) was adopted in October 2019.

8.4. LPP1 was subject to a review in 2021 under Regulation 10A of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Local Plan is therefore post-NPPF. LPP1 has been reviewed within 5 years of adoption and LPP2 is less than 5 years old.

8.5. Contrary to the views of some objectors the development plan for VWHDC is not out-of-date. There is no such thing as an out-of-date development plan. The starting point by virtue of s.38(6) of the Planning

and Compulsory Purchase Act is the development plan.[162] That does not change whether or not any policies attract reduced weight.[163]

8.6. The policies are consistent with the NPPF and are recently adopted. The support for the HIF1 scheme from the development plan is overwhelming. The NPPF is guidance – the presumption in favour of the development plan still exists. The NPPF provides that the delivery of sustainable development should be through the preparation and implementation of plans and emphasises that development plans remain the starting point for decision-making and in determining whether a proposal is in fact a sustainable one.

8.7. In this case, the development plan was made in the context of the NPPF and has taken account of the objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing, the importance of affordable housing and the various factors that inform sustainable development. It is the expression of a plan which was shaped by local people.

8.8. It was alleged by some that the housing requirement for VWHDC is out-of -date. Ms Baker explained that the housing requirement was set by Policy CP4A in LPP2. There is a combined requirement of 22,760 homes in VWHDC. Some of that relates to the unmet need of Oxford. Whilst the housing requirement was set prior to the standard method being introduced by NPPF, the change to the standard method actually meant that the need figure was lower than that in the plan. That is unusual, but whilst the Council is monitoring against the standard method, it remains committed to supply the housing as required in the Local Plan.

8.9. Mr Turnbull refers to a 4-year requirement but, as Ms Baker explained, this is based on a misunderstanding of housing land supply calculations for monitoring purposes. Para 77 NPPF provides for a relaxed four-year housing land supply if NPPF paragraph 226 applies. However, that does not and cannot alter the requirement in the Local Plan. Moreover, it cannot and does not amend the overall supply to meet need that the Council has planned for.

8.10. Mr Turnbull had a particular issue with Policy CP17 of LPP1. He alleged that it was out-of-date because it refers to LTP4 as opposed to the more recent LTCP. Ms Baker provided evidence that the LTCP includes the components of HIF1 just as the LTP4 does. There is no inconsistency on a proper assessment.

8.11. Policy CP17 is fully compliant with para 110 of the NPPF. It identifies the components of the HIF1 scheme needed to deliver growth in the South East Sub Area of the District which includes land in the Science Vale and which in turn will accommodate large scale housing and employment growth. Mr Butler's view was that whilst Policy CP17 may refer to the

[162] *Peel Investments (North) Limited v SoSHCLG* [2020] EWCA Civ 1175 para 55

[163] See *Monkhill Limited v SoS HCLG* [2019] EWHC 1993 (Admin) para 45 – s.38(6) is to be applied "in any event

LTP4, it advises the package of highway infrastructure will be "*refined"* through development of LPT4 and LPP2. His opinion is that:

"It recognises that highway infrastructure identified in LTP4 which included the HIF1 scheme could change. Whilst LTP4 was replaced with the LTCP, the LTCP still identifies the HIF1 scheme and there was, therefore, no need to revise Policy CP17 through the LPP2".

Whether the package is refined through LTP4 or LTCP or not at all – it makes no difference to the operation of Policy CP17 as both those plans contain the relevant components of HIF1.

8.12. Mr Turnbull submits that there is an inconsistency with paragraph 116 NPPF. This relates to the "*priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements*". He agreed that when the LPP1 was examined and adopted, NPPF 2012 was relevant. This included paragraph 35:

"Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed where practical to….give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities..".

8.13. Both versions of national policy give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements. Mr Turnbull agreed that consistency with national policy would have been a matter for the Examination Inspector when assessing LPP1 for soundness. Policy CP17 was not found to be inconsistent. Ms Baker could see nothing materially different in the intention of either version of the NPPF.

8.14. Mr Tamplin claimed that the Plan is inconsistent with paragraph 115 NPPF due to the impacts of climate change. As Ms Bowerman told the Inquiry (and with which Mr Butler agreed), paragraph 115 relates to severe effects in relation to highways and has nothing to do with climate change. If Mr Tamplin was correct, then any new highways infrastructure provided for in a Local Plan (in accordance with paragraph 110 NPPF) would conflict with paragraph 115 NPPF.

8.15. The SCNP has now passed the referendum stage and it must therefore be made by VWHDC The Neighbourhood Plan is in force as part of the statutory development plan from the passing of the referendum and will have full legal effect when made by the LPA. This makes no difference to the strategy of LPP1 and LPP2 or the weight to the development plan overall.

8.16. The LPP1 and LPP2 plans set out a clear spatial strategy identifying where homes and jobs are to be provided and makes provision for the infrastructure needed to support them. The strategy and the policies were examined and were found sound. This is a relatively recent spatial strategy, which has been reviewed and which is being taken forward in the emerging plan. It deserves full weight in the planning balance and it is significant that the HIF1 scheme is required to deliver it.

Compliance with policy

8.17. *Principle of Development* Policy CP17 of the LPP1 - *Delivery of Strategic Highway Improvements within the South-East Vale Sub-Area*- identifies the HIF1 components needed to mitigate the impact of growth across the South East Vale Sub Area. Policies CP18 LPP1 - *Safeguarding of Land for Transport Schemes in the South East Vale Sub-Area* - and CP18a - *Safeguarding Land for Strategic Highway Improvements within the South East Vale Sub Area* - safeguard land for HIF1. The proposal is compliant with CP17, CP18 and CP18a and HIF1 is plan led as required by paragraphs 15 and 114 of the NPPF.

Sustainable Travel[164]

8.18. Policy CP33 – *Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility* - is the relevant overarching policy engaged. The policy identifies six criteria that the Council will seek to achieve:

i) actively seek to ensure that the impacts of new development on the strategic and local road network are minimised

ii) ensure that developments are designed in a way to promote sustainable transport access both within new sites, and linking with surrounding facilities and employment

iii) support measures identified in the Local Transport Plan for the district, including within the relevant local area strategies

iv) support improvements for accessing Oxford

v) ensure that transport improvements are designed to minimise any effects on the amenities, character and special qualities of the surrounding area, and

vi) promote and support improvements to the transport network that increase safety, improve air quality and/or make our towns and villages more attractive.

8.19. Mr Butler's evidence is that the HIF1 scheme is supported by criteria i), ii), iii), iv) and vi). He had initially thought that criterion iv) was irrelevant but in his evidence-in-chief he told the Inquiry that he had now considered the representation of Mr Marion of the Oxford Bus Company[165] and concludes that the proposals will support improvements for accessing Oxford in accordance with criterion iv).

8.20. In terms of the other criteria, Mr Butler's written evidence is that the proposals seek to improve the local road network by providing additional

[164] Mr Butler POE paragraphs 4.5-4.8
[165] CD N.07

capacity to accommodate traffic flows from planned development. The proposals provide for bus services together with pedestrian and cycle paths. These connect with existing and planned housing and with commercial developments providing residents and employees with options for sustainable travel rather than being reliant on the private motor vehicle. Examples provided are improved and sustainable transport links from new housing permitted and planned south of the A4130 (Valley Park – site 29) with commercial developments existing and/or planned at the Didcot A site and Milton Park and Culham Science Park. In turn, increased use of active travel improves health and increased use of public transport can contribute to the improvement of air quality and reducing congestion. No safety issues have been raised and Mr Butler, in cross-examination, was satisfied that OCC would not be promoting accident prone routes.

8.21. Policy CP35 – *Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking* - is a District Wide Policy which supports the Council working with OCC and others to promote "*the use of public transport, walking, cycling and efficient car use*…". Mr Butler confirms that 5 out of the 7 criteria are relevant and the proposals comply with all because the provision of sustainable modes of transport can encourage a modal shift and the new footways, cycleways and public transport opportunities provide accessible and sustainable links between existing and planned housing and commercial developments.

8.22. This Inquiry has heard a great deal from objectors about how new highways infrastructure will simply encourage more car use. There has been a failure to comprehend that this is not just infrastructure for vehicles. New highways infrastructure will lead to improvements in speed and reliability of bus services, encouraging use and patronage. The infrastructure includes new footpaths and cycle paths which will encourage active travel leading to the knock-on benefits identified. This is wholly compliant with development Pppan policy.

Landscape Character and Appearance[166]

8.23. Policy CP44 provides that "key features that contribute to the nature and quality of the…landscape will be protected from harmful development and where possible enhanced…". Whilst Mr Butler does identify conflict with Part 1 of Policy CP44 and SC3 of the SCNP, he gives moderate weight to the harm to views 7 and 13 in the SCNP, he does qualify this conflict.

8.24. Firstly, this is not all beautiful, unspoiled, pristine, open countryside and there are no designations affecting the countryside located within VWHDC.

8.25. Secondly, the environment specific to VWHDC is relevant. The HIF1 proposals largely pass through urban areas and part of the route passes

[166] Mr Butler POE paragraphs 4.9 – 4.21

through land identified as an Enterprise Zone and on which the Council is pursuing a Local Development Order (D- Tech LDO site 23).[167] The LDO is at an advanced stage of preparation and envisages a data centre and battery storage and buildings of up to 21m in height.

8.26. The site is not in a designated landscape as it passes through the Vale and there are no important landscape settings to villages in this part of the Vale. The '*rural*' area between site 23 and the River Thames already accommodates a railway, rail siding, landfill and mineral extraction works and haul road.

8.27. Mr Butler also recognises that, as LPP1 and LPP2 safeguard land for the development, the fact that there is potential for landscape and visual impacts has already been considered and been found to be acceptable and/or necessary given that the policies were found sound and are part of the adopted Local Plan. As a consequence, he confirms that this development is acceptable in principle, and it is relevant to consider the measures proposed to integrate the development.

8.28. Due to the nature of the proposals, it is unlikely that landscape mitigation can hide the development or prevent any landscape or visual harm. This was also accepted by Ms Ash, on behalf of the applicant. Whilst the scale of effects are not agreed between the main parties, Mr Butler is of the view that planning conditions (e.g. 3, 21, 22, 23, 31) can secure landscaping, including replacement trees and tree protection to assist in reducing the landscape and visual impacts. Conditions 6 and 7 could ensure that elements of the Scheme such as lighting and noise barriers are designed to reduce landscape and visual effects. In terms of tree loss, Mr Butler has considered conditions relating to tree planting, a CEMP, Landscape Environmental Management Plan (LEMP), landscaping scheme and tree survey. He has suggested colours, transparent panels to be considered on acoustic barriers, climbing plants, vertical planting and general planting.

8.29. There is residual harm but this is to be expected and can be minimised.

Noise[168]

8.30. Initially Mr Butler had identified conflict with Policies DP23 - *Impact of Development on Amenity* - and DP25 - *Noise Pollution* - and some conflict with criterion v) CP33 of LPP1. However, Mr Butler has now reflected on the evidence provided to the Inquiry and has modified his opinion. The only expert noise evidence was from Mr Pagett who concludes at paragraph 4.17 that:

> "adequate mitigation has been provided to avoid significant adverse effects, mitigate and minimise adverse effects, and contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life."

[167] INQ 03.2

[168] Mr Butler POE paragraphs4.22-4.26

8.31. Mr Butler notes that he is not an expert on noise matters and places weight on the conclusion at paragraph 4.18 of Mr Pagett's proof of evidence, that the proposals comply with policies DP23 and DP25 of the LPP2. In the absence of any contrary technical evidence on noise including any evidence of his own, he revised his opinion and now concludes that the Scheme is compliant with policies DP23, DP25 and criterion v) of CP33.

Design[169]

8.32. Policy CP37 – *Design and Local Distinctiveness* – and Policy CP16b LPP2 – *Didcot Garden Town* – are both relevant. Policy CP37 seeks high quality design and Policy CP16b requires proposals in the Didcot Garden Town Masterplan area to demonstrate how they proactively contribute to the Masterplan principles which include design, local character, density and tenure, transport and movement, heritage, landscape, green infrastructure and social and community benefits.

8.33. The Didcot Garden Town Masterplan is non-statutory and is not adopted policy. Mr Butler places only limited weight on the DGTDP. In short, the Council notes that the DGTDP encourages pioneering architecture and it had been hoped that the Science Bridge could be a landmark feature. Mr Butler's opinion is that the design is not "*pioneering*". However, he told the Inquiry that he had listened carefully to the evidence of both Mr Blanchard and Mr Chan and he fully understood the construction constraints including cost constraints and complex engineering constraints. He noted that a revised routing was considered but was rejected and he does not challenge that course further.

8.34. The highest that the Council puts this is that it is disappointing. Furthermore, Mr Butler is of the view that appearance could be improved via conditions in order to ensure landscaping on approaches, hedge or shrub planting added to embankments, consideration given to colour, texture, cladding, green walls, public art, are all possible. Mr Butler does not dismiss the possibility that the Science Bridge could still be an attractive landmark[77] and he considers that the proposals can, with conditions, comply with Policy CP37 and Policy CP16b.

Biodiversity[170]

8.35. The Council is satisfied that BNG of at least 10% can be achieved. There is no adverse harm to designated sites or protected species identified. The proposals are compliant with CP46 LPP1 (*Conservation and Improvement Biodiversity*) and SC6 of the SCNP.

[169] Mr Butler POE paragraphs 4.25-4.27
[170] Mr Butler POE paragraphs 4.28 -4.30

Heritage[171]

8.36. Policies DP36, DP37, DP38, DP39 address heritage assets. The Council's Conservation Officer has identified no impacts on any heritage assets and archaeological interest can be mitigated through conditions (28, 29). The proposals comply with the relevant policies.

Other matters[172]

8.37. In relation to other matters such as flooding, drainage, air quality, contamination, watercourses, public rights of way, Mr Butler confirmed that he had not read or heard any technical evidence to persuade him that there are any other impacts that should justify refusal of the Scheme.

Conclusion on compliance with Development Plan

8.38. As Mr Butler concluded in his unchallenged oral evidence, when the development plan is read as a whole, the proposals comply with it and are in accordance with policies which are up-to-date and should be given full weight.

Emerging Joint Local Plan

8.39. Together with SODC, VWHDC has also made considerable progress with a JLP which has reached Regulation 18 stage. Mr Tamplin gave the emerging plan moderate weight. Mr Turnbull gave it limited weight. It is not clear how or why there is a difference between parties jointly represented. Both Mr Tamplin and Mr Turnbull agreed that NPPF paragraph 48 was relevant to assessing the weight to the JLP. It was agreed that the stage of preparation was early and the extent of unresolved objections was unknown.

8.40. It makes little difference whether little or moderate weight is given to the JLP because, in terms of HIF1, the JLP has the same focus on development in the Science Vale area and Policy SP1 continued to focus on the Science Vale and garden communities and relies on the housing and employment land supply as allocated. The Emerging Plan safeguards the transport schemes which include the components of HIF1 at IN3.[173]

The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 5) (The First Matter identified by the Secretary of State)

8.41. The spatial strategy of the Local Plan is "*the need to support the delivery of new housing and jobs to be complemented by new services, facilities and infrastructure*". There are three Sub-Area Strategies to give "spatial expression to the strategy" including South East Vale which includes

[171] Mr Butler POE Paragraph 4.31
[172] Mr Butler POE Paragraph 4.32
[173] Page 501

much of the Science Vale area as well as significant employment sites at Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Didcot A Power Station. The strategy will support the delivery of sustainable growth through three key strands:

- Focusing sustainable growth within the Science Vale area;
- Reinforcing the service centre roles of the main settlements; and
- Promoting thriving villages and rural communities.

8.42. In order to deliver sustainable growth, LPP1 Figure 4.1 shows that there needs to be "*a comprehensive package of strategic and local infrastructure and services alongside the housing and employment growth*" and that the "delivery of high-quality development across Science Vale" includes "*the provision of enabling infrastructure*".[174]

8.43. The spatial strategy is underpinned by 5 core policies. Core Policy 4 of LPP1 and Core Policy 4a LPP2 set a combined housing requirement of at least 22,760 homes for the District and cross boundary needs. If not completed, the same allocations (and more) exist in the JLP. Overall, approximately 70% of the predicted jobs and 75% of the strategic housing are to be delivered within the Science Vale area.[175] LPP1 paragraph 4.44 states that "*Essential strategic highway infrastructure has been identified to support the identified growth across Science Vale*".

8.44. Core Policy 15 of LPP1 provides for 9,055 dwellings to be delivered through strategic allocations. Significant allocations in VWHDC linked to HIF1. These include Valley Park that was allocated for 2,550 dwellings, but there is an outline planning permission for up to 4254 homes. North West Valley Park is allocated for 800 homes, Milton Heights was allocated for 400 homes whilst 458 have been permitted, West of Harwell Village was allocated for 200 homes and 207 have been permitted and completed. East of Sutton Courtenay (Hobby Horse Lane site) was allocated for 220 homes and planning permission was granted on appeal in December 2023 for 175 homes. All these developments are in Science Vale.

8.45. These allocations have been found sound to meet the housing need of VWHDC which complies with the Government objective of boosting the supply of housing. The Examination Inspector found in November 2016 that the Transport Impacts Study undertaken was not rebutted by any evidence to demonstrate that it was anything other than "*robust*" and that "*the 'starting point' situation for the Vale is as a district which very much suffers from traffic congestion*".[176] That was before housing was allocated, granted planning permission, or built.

[174] LPP1 Page 39
[175] LPP1 Paragraph 4.44
[176] CD G2.07 page 39 paragraphs 143-145

8.46. The need for housing is demonstrated through an up-to-date local plan found sound and adopted. The need for HIF1 is required to support that housing and the strategy which is an integral plank of the Local Plan. Without HIF1, Mr Butler told the Inquiry that the issues would be as follows:

a. The planned enhancements for cycling, walking and public transport would not be forthcoming;

b. The likelihood with growth already permitted is that more journeys would be undertaken by car.

c. For developments already permitted in the area e.g 4,254 dwellings at Valley Park and 175 dwellings at Hobby Horse Lane (sites 29 & 19 respectively), the developments would continue and likely add more congestion to the existing road network resulting in gridlock.

d. Congestion would further delay public transport.

e. With the limited cycle and walking connections these modes of travel would not be attractive and the anticipated modal shift would be highly unlikely.

f. Reduced bus patronage would likely reduce service frequency.

g. Increased congestion would add to the causes of climate change and increased pollution.

8.47. Furthermore, for planning decisions, it is likely that OCC as Highway Authority would object to proposed developments in the area including those allocated in the Local Plan and which have yet to be permitted, and there is a risk these developments may not proceed. The housing, including affordable homes may not be realised. Such a situation could also put the Vale in a position whereby it cannot show a 5-year housing land supply which then risks unplanned housing growth in the district. That would be contrary to its plan and contrary to NPPF paragraph 15 which seeks to ensure that development is "*genuinely plan-led*".

8.48. The Council would still need to decide applications against its adopted housing strategy and balance harm against benefits and consequently, the Council could still permit if it considered benefits outweigh the harm, housing on sites such as NW Valley Park, even though such development could continue to add traffic to a severely congested road network.

8.49. The outcomes foreseen by Mr Butler are not consistent with Government policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes as set out in the NPPF and would risk either non-delivery, unplanned delivery or housing without supporting infrastructure.

The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 6) (The Second Matter identified by the Secretary of State)

8.50. The strategy in the VWHDC development plan for building a strong, competitive economy in accordance with NPPF Chapter 6 is similar to and entwined with that for housing growth. It is focussed on Science Vale and with the new housing growth to complement the economic strategy, the jobs creation was forecast.

8.51. Core Policy 15 LPP1 sets out an employment provision of 208 acres for South-East Vale with much of this being within Science Vale. LPP1 explains that about 15,830 of 23,000 new jobs are located in the South East Vale area with a number of significant centres of employment, including several sites in the Science Vale area such as Harwell Campus and Milton Park, designated as an Enterprise Zone in 2011.

8.52. Science Vale is "*one of the key growth areas set out within the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan and is the focus of significant investment*". Core Policy 17 LPP1 lists the HIF1 scheme specifically as necessary to mitigate the impact of planned growth across Science Vale to secure the future economic viability of the area.

8.53. Paragraph 85 NPPF is very relevant and underpins how the strategy for VWHDC Local Plans respond to this part of the NPPF. The strategy for VWHDC encapsulates para 85 seeking planning policies that help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. The development plan sets a strategy to bring about these conditions.

Conclusions

8.54. Whilst Mr Butler notes some harms, these are limited and would have been recognised at the time that the Local Plan safeguarded land for HIF1.

8.55. The Council's position is that the proposals fully comply with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations indicating otherwise. The proposals also comply with NPPF paragraphs 8, 15, 60, 63, 74, 85, 110, 115, 116, 180(d). But to the extent that there may be any conflict with the development plan, or other harm arising from this development, it is submitted that this is more than outweighed by its benefits which include:

a. Delivery of a significant amount of development meeting objectively assessed housing need allocated in the development plan and identified commercial land;

b. Housing and employment opportunities;

c. Investment in the local and wider economy through construction works;

d. New residents and employees bringing economic benefits;

e. Housing, including much needed affordable housing;

f. Sustainable travel links by public transport, cycling and walking between housing and commercial areas

g. Potential to reduce congestion by providing the sustainable, safer and more attractive travel links between commercial sites and housing, to schools and between villages encouraging less reliance on cars for journeys;

h. Opportunity for less congestion and reliable bus services, for bus services to grow and a modal shift to sustainable travel which then benefits air quality and fewer carbon emissions;

i. Opportunity to reduce traffic through villages;

j. Reduced noise for numerous local residents;

k. New planting and biodiversity net gain;

l. Much needed improvement to Didcot avoiding development moratoriums, enduring traffic pressures and poor connectivity.

8.56. The Council considers the benefits to be substantial. Not providing the proposals would exacerbate road congestion for permitted housing and employment in the Vale of White Horse District and jeopardise future housing development and commercial development such as D- Tech LDO (site 23) in the Enterprise Zone.[177] As Ms Baker sets out, a calculation undertaken in 2020 demonstrated that HIF1 would underpin at least 19,319 homes directly within South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts.[178] That figure is now likely to be higher.

8.57. Many interested parties who have spoken at the Inquiry have realised the need for highways infrastructure: Mr Peacock told the Inquiry that "*road infrastructure is woeful at the moment..and needs to be improved…*"; David Pryor said that "*HIF addresses three key road blocks…our..ancient travel infrastructure is choked*"; Jonathan Alcantara from the Culham Bus Club gave powerful evidence about how his attempts to introduce more sustainable travel for the Europa School is still met sometimes with children on the bus for 2 hours instead of in education; James Barlow said that the District "*absolutely needs better infrastructure*".[179]

8.58. Indeed, even objectors recognise that housing and employment growth are needed and that a solution must be found. They do not support HIF1 as the solution but provide no credible alternatives. Even if they had provided credible alternatives, given the policy support for the proposals,

[177] Mr Butler POE paragraph 6.3
[178] Ms Baker POE paragraph 17
[179] INQ 16,INQ 27 & INQ 10

they are irrelevant. It has not been demonstrated that there is any real possibility of any suggested alternatives of coming about – they do no more than cast doubt.[180] The arguments are further weakened by the lack of any real answer as to how alternatives would be funded in the absence of the housing infrastructure funding which, as Ms Baker understands, was for this scheme only.

8.59. The Council stresses that there is a significant strategic need and multiple benefits of the HIF1 scheme and there is a relationship between significant levels of identified housing and employment in adopted and emerging Local Plans that are dependent on the delivery of the HIF1 scheme.[181] Furthermore, the strategy for housing and economic growth in the JLP also relies on HIF1. In short, it is critical to housing and employment in the area and to the future of economic growth at Science Vale and in maintaining public confidence in a plan-led system.

8.60. For all those reasons the SoS is respectfully invited to grant planning permission.

[180] *R. (Mount Cook Land Ltd) v Westminster City Council* [2003] EWCA Civ 1346, [2017] P.T.S.R. 1166 [30].
[181] Ms Baker POE paragraph 63

9. The Case for South Oxfordshire District Council (Rule 6 Party)

[This summary of the case for the South Oxfordshire District Council is based on the closing submissions, the proofs of evidence and other submissions to the Inquiry.]

9.1. SODC strongly supports this planning application. The HIF1 scheme is needed to support large-scale plan-led housing and employment growth. It will deliver huge benefits. It is essential that permission is granted without delay so that those benefits can be realised.

9.2. The SOLP explicitly supports the delivery of the HIF1 scheme, in Policy TRANS 1b. The land needed to deliver the road is safeguarded in Policy TRANS 3 and appendix 5. The relevant strategic housing policies emphasise the need for HIF1. The SOLP provides strong support for the principle of the development.

Need for the Scheme

Delivering Planned Housing Growth

9.3. The spatial strategy of the SOLP includes focusing major new development in Science Vale. To implement that strategy, the SOLP makes several strategic allocations, including those in Policies STRAT 3 and H2, STRAT 9 and STRAT 10i. Together these policies allocate land for 10,199 new homes within the current plan period. To put that figure into context, it is close to half the minimum housing requirement for the entire plan period,[182] and a third of the total housing supply identified in the plan.[183]

9.4. Some of the Didcot allocations have already been consented and/or delivered - despite HIF1 not being in place to mitigate their impact. That is in addition to several very large developments which are committed or delivered around Didcot in neighbouring Vale of the White Horse. But 1,400 homes are yet to be built on sites around Didcot in SODC's area.[184] All of the planned development at Culham (3,500 homes) and Berinsfield (1,700 homes) is still to come.

9.5. The HIF1 scheme was included as part of the planned highway mitigation for planned housing and employment growth in the traffic modelling supporting the soundness of the SOLP. The Inspector who examined the SOLP concluded that the HIF1 scheme was necessary to support the new housing planned around Didcot and at Culham and Berinsfield. His report identifies that the HIF1 scheme "*must be delivered prior to any significant development at Culham*", that it "*needs to be in place prior to*

[182] CD G.01 p.28 policy STRAT2 sets a minimum requirement of 23,550

[183] CD G.01 p.88 table 4c identifies a total supply of 30,056

[184] Emma Baker confirmed that of the allocations made in Policy H2, Didcot North East, Great Western Park, Hadden Hill and Land South of A4130 had been completed. Ladygrove East has outline planning permission for 750 homes, 500 of which are affected by a HIF1-related occupancy restriction. The other three allocations (each for 300 homes) have no permission yet. 500 + 900 = 1,400

the commencement of development at Berinsfield" and that it "*will enable infrastructure to support key development sites in and around Didcot*".[185] Thus the transport evidence base supporting the planned growth in SODC's area is based on the assumption that HIF1 will come forward.

9.6. There have been additional windfall developments in the four years since the SOLP examination. A recent example is the development of approx. 150 houses at Land at Ladygrove, which was allowed on appeal. [186]

9.7. The position is confirmed by the adopted policy wording, which expressly links the delivery of the houses to the provision of planned infrastructure, including HIF1, Policy STRAT 3 and Policy STRAT 9. It is fanciful to suggest that such high levels of housing growth can be delivered without some significant new highways infrastructure to support it. In fact, there is widespread agreement that some additional infrastructure is needed. Many local people who oppose the HIF1 scheme nevertheless acknowledge that infrastructure is needed, and that 'something needs to be done'.[187] The objections are mainly to the solution which has been chosen, rather than questioning the need for a solution at all.

Delivering planned employment growth

9.8. The SOLP also plans for significant employment growth in the Didcot Garden Town (DGT) area. The strategic housing allocations at Culham (STRAT 9) and Berinsfield (STRAT 10i) both include land for employment use (this is also referred to in Policy EMP 1). This employment development is subject to the same policy wording as the housing developments which are planned for these locations and is therefore expressly linked to the HIF1 scheme in the same way.

9.9. In addition, Policy EMP 1 identifies 6.5ha of employment land at Milton Park in the Vale of the White Horse which is required to meet cross-boundary employment needs. This is in addition to the 28 ha of employment land included for Milton Park in the Vale Local Plan.

9.10. In selecting these locations for employment growth, SODC has sought to make "*a strong link between the housing growth in Didcot and the business growth needs of 'Science Vale'*" and has sought to allocate employment land within strategic housing allocations "*to enable the creation of sustainable communities and to provide new residents with the chance to work locally*". This is all consistent with SODC's strategy and priorities for Science Vale, which include providing "*an environment in which science-led business can flourish*".[188]

[185] CD G 1.8 Examination report paragraphs 121, 136, 182

[186] EiC of Emma Baker and statement of Cllr Rouane. The site is shown at number 26 on Mr Wisdom's Fig. 3 at INQ 3.2

[187] See eg. the contributions from Nick Fielding (Burcot and Clifton Hampden PC); (Didcot Town Council); James Barlow; Cllr Robin Bennett.

[188] CD G.1 p127

9.11. As with the housing growth, employment growth across the plan period was included in the modelling which underpinned the SOLP. The final stage of the *Evaluation of Traffic Impacts: Stage 3* modelled 4,282 jobs within SODC's area.[189] Again, the HIF1 scheme was included within the model, providing an indirect link between the employment growth and the need for HIF1.

9.12. More direct evidence was provided by Steven Sensecall on behalf of UKAEA. He also acts on behalf of CEG, the promoter of the STRAT 9 allocation. He confirmed that planning permission for the employment proposal coming forward on the "*No. 1 site*" is expected to be subject to a Grampian condition limiting development by reference to the HIF1 scheme. He also explained how UKAEA's ability to develop the CSC has been limited by OCC's position on highway capacity, recounting that it had been necessary to enter into a s. 106 agreement to 'trade' floorspace from an existing outline consent to bring forward reserved matters on a more urgent development to address this issue. His evidence reflects what is stated explicitly in the SOLP: "*CSC cannot expand without necessary infrastructure, including the Didcot to Culham River Crossing and Clifton Hampden Bypass*".[190]

Addressing existing highway conditions

9.13. Several witnesses gave evidence of the conditions which are currently experienced on the highway network, and the lack of resilience in the system. It is not necessary to rely on transport modelling to understand this evidence.

9.14. The Inquiry has heard repeated evidence about the bottlenecks which exist at the Culham and Clifton Hampden bridges, even in normal peak conditions. This is exacerbated when one or both bridges are closed due to flooding, or for repairs. The evidence from John Alcantra in respect of the Culham Bus Club and Sue Scane on behalf of the Didcot Volunteer Drivers group which takes people to medical appointments was particularly compelling. These are real world impacts which affect real people's lives, and which a model cannot capture.[191]

9.15. The problems with the existing highway network were also made clear in the series of appeal decisions in 2018/19 where Inspectors upheld refusals of permission for single dwellings, based on the impacts of additional traffic *on* the network.[192] In one of these decisions the Inspector commented that "the residual cumulative impact is already severe without the proposed development".[193]

[189] CD G.1.6 Table 3-1 p8
[190] CD G.1 SOLP p.46
[191] INQ 27 & INQ 12
[192] CD L.1 OCC App SoC Appendix 4: Hobbyhorse Lane decision paragraph 10; the New House, Churchmere Road decision paragraphs 8-9; The Barn, Church Street decision, paragraphs 7 and 12 West Barn, Peewit Farm decision ; paragraph 7-8
[193] The Barn, Church Street decision paragraph 7.

9.16. Such concerns ultimately led to the "*Releasing Development Strategy*".[194] The strategy involves OCC not objecting to developments of 10+ houses that will generate new peak traffic movements "*on the basis HIF 1 funding has been secured and OCC is confident in delivering HIF 1*". It provides that "*occupation controls will be applied to development sites to lessen the cumulative impact on the highway network*". That strategy has allowed some development to come forward at Ladygrove East. 250 of the consented 750 homes can come forward in advance of HIF1, the remainder are subject to an occupancy restriction.[195] But clearly this is not a long-term solution.

Benefits of the Scheme

Delivering planned housing growth

9.17. The delivery of necessary infrastructure to unlock the high levels of planned housing growth in the DGT area is clearly the most significant benefit of the HIF1 scheme and must attract a high level of weight. HIF1 is fully consistent with the Government's policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes. The SOLP assumes that the HIF1 scheme would come forward – in fact it was anticipated that it would be delivered by 2024. The existence of this important highways infrastructure underpins the soundness of the allocations, and the wider spatial strategy.

9.18. Paragraph 15 NPPF provides that the planning system should be "*genuinely plan-led*", and that "*succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area*". The SOLP sets a vision and strategy for housing and employment growth to be focussed in the Science Vale, building on the existing success of this area. The SOLP provides for the necessary infrastructure to facilitate and support that growth, and HIF1 is a fundamental element of that. If the strategic sites around Didcot and at Culham and Berinsfield are to be delivered in a plan-led way, then it necessarily follows that HIF1 needs to be delivered.

Affordable housing

9.19. The provision of affordable homes to meet local needs is one of SODC's corporate priorities. The large allocations at Culham and Berinsfield are expected to make up the bulk of affordable housing delivery. These two sites are expected to deliver 5,200 homes. There is a proposal within the emerging plan to require 50% of dwellings on such sites to be affordable,[196] but even if the current policy requirement for 40% were to remain, this would equate to 2,080 affordable homes from these two sites. The HIF1 scheme will unlock the delivery of those much-needed homes and this is another significant benefit of the Scheme.

[194] Aron Wisdom appendix 2.2
[195] EiC of Emma Baker for SODC
[196] CD G.18 Draft policy HOU3

Delivering employment growth

9.20. Prof. Sir Ian Chapman and Steven Sensecall both spoke compellingly about the nature and scale of the economic benefits which would flow from the planned growth at Culham. The HIF1 scheme will also support significant levels of economic growth at Berinsfield and Milton Park.

9.21. Paragraph 85 of the NPPF is directly relevant to the strategy of the SOLP. The HIF1 scheme will help to create conditions in which businesses can invest and expand. It is needed to support economic growth and productivity in the Science Vale. It will allow what is already a site which is recognised as being of international importance to build on its strengths and address challenges of the future. Significant weight should therefore be placed on this benefit. The HIF1 scheme is fully consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy.

Addressing existing highways issues

9.22. HIF1 would address the current conditions faced on the local highway network in three key ways:

a. It would provide more capacity and thus relieve congestion which is currently experienced in pinch point locations. The Rule 6 objectors have advanced a case that, 10 years after the HIF1 scheme is opened the traffic picture on the network would be approximately the same as the day before the road opens, so that sooner or later conditions will deteriorate to the point where the benefit of HIF1 is lost.[197] However this fails to recognise the important fact that, by that time, the HIF1 scheme will have facilitated significant amounts of planned growth. The HIF1 scheme is not proposed as a complete and for-all-time solution to congestion. It is intended to facilitate a level of planned growth, which is what it will achieve.

b. The HIF1 scheme provides an important additional river crossing which will help address the issue of severance between Didcot and the CSC, and more generally between Didcot and areas to the north of the Thames where significant housing growth is planned. This severance affects all modes of transport. Although falling outside SODC's area, the Science Bridge will also help to address severance caused by the railway line.

c. By providing an additional river crossing, the HIF1 scheme will also help to improve the resilience of the local transport network. Many witnesses have spoken about this issue, and the impact on the network when there is an event such as flooding or an accident or road closure.

Delivering improvements in active travel and public transport

[197] Mr Woolley, in XX of Claudia Currie and Aron Wisdom

9.23. Policy TRANS 2 states that SODC will, among other things, work with OCC and others to "ensure new development is designed to encourage walking and cycling" and support "sustainable transport improvements in the wider Didcot Garden Town area and in and around Oxford, particularly where they improve access to strategic development locations". Policy TRANS 5 applies to consideration of development proposals and requires developments to "provide safe and convenient routes for cyclists and pedestrians, both within the development, and including links to rights of way and other off-site walking and cycling routes where relevant".

9.24. The HIF1 scheme meets the aims of these policies. It provides a walking and cycling route which will be segregated for most of its length. Ms Bowerman's assessment is that this will be a high-quality provision and will provide a genuine alternative to the private car.

9.25. The Rule 6 objectors compared this aspect of the HIF1 scheme unfavourably to the Garden Line, which was originally illustrated in the DGTDP.[198] But there was never any adopted plan or policy to deliver the Garden Line and the proposal was later removed from the reviewed delivery plan, as Mr Tamplin acknowledged.[199]

9.26. In any event, the objectors who mentioned this proposal may have been somewhat mistaken as to what it actually involved – the DGTDP makes clear that it was largely a case of upgrading existing routes.[200] Emma Baker's assessment was that she saw the Garden Line in the HIF1 scheme.[201] Certainly the walking and cycling provision associated with the HIF1 scheme is a vast improvement on the existing routes between Didcot and Culham, particularly for cyclists – indeed Mr Williams agreed that it was "*far better than what exists currently*".[202]

9.27. The HIF1 scheme is just one part of a wider walking and cycling strategy. By bringing forward the strategic housing allocations at Culham and Berinsfield, the HIF1 scheme will unlock further active travel improvements in the area. Policy STRAT 9 will require the housing-led development to deliver:

> "provision for excellent sustainable transport facilities including, but not limited to, new and improvements to existing cycle and footpaths", including "provision of a new cycle bridge and associated connectivity and paths across the River Thames to connect appropriately with Abingdon".

[198] CD G.6 pdf 26/80 and p126 pdf 32/80
[199] XX by VoWHDC
[200] CD G.6 DGTDP chapter 5, p.110 pdf 27/80 states "*Much of the route to the south of the River Thames exists and only requires comparatively modest infrastructure intervention to make it very attractive to use*"
[201] EiC for SODC
[202] XX by OCC

The CEG consultation document produced by Ms Bowerman shows this indicatively.[203] Together with the HIF1 scheme, this would result in an almost fully segregated cycling route from Didcot all the way through to Abingdon.

9.28. The consultation document also shows the potential for other cycle connections through the STRAT 9 and STRAT 8 sites. Similarly, Policy STRAT 10i will require the strategic development at Berinsfield to deliver:

> "high quality infrastructure to encourage cycling and walking, and provide links through the site and to adjacent employment and into the village of Berinsfield and to other surrounding locations including Culham; specifically (but not limited to) improving the existing pedestrian/cyclist infrastructure along the A415 from Berinsfield to Culham, and providing for a cycle route from Berinsfield to Oxford".

9.29. There has also been evidence of the improvements for bus travel. The Scheme itself will improve bus travel by providing additional highway network capacity which will make the highway network more resilient and improve journey time reliability, and through incorporating bus priority measures which will also improve journey times.[204] All of this will make buses a more attractive option than is currently the case.

9.30. As with the walking and cycling provision, by unlocking development on STRAT 9 and 10i the HIF1 scheme will indirectly lead to further improvements in bus provision within the Science Vale area. Policy STRAT 9 requires development to deliver:

"bus improvements including provision of a scheduled bus service, with a minimum of two buses per hour between Berinsfield, Culham and Abingdon, with options to extend or vary services to locations such as Cowley, Chalgrove and Didcot",

Policy STRAT 10i will require the Berinsfield development to '*pump prime*' the same services.

9.31. Finally, Policy STRAT 9 also requires development to deliver:

> "contributions to Culham station improvements including longer platforms, public realm, new station building, and potentially car parking".

Both Ms Baker and Mr Wisdom also confirmed that the delivery of large amounts of housing at Culham would support the business case for improved rail frequency at Culham.

[203] INQ 69 pdf 7

[204] See the representations from Mr Alcantra INQ 27 and from Mr Marion on behalf of the Oxford Bus Company CD N.07

Alternative Ways of Meeting the Need and Delivering the Benefits

9.32. Some of the witnesses for the Rule 6 objectors (and some other interested parties) have suggested that HIF1 is not essential, and that the planned housing growth in this area can be unlocked with other transport solutions/plans based on active travel or public transport improvements.

9.33. The relevant legal principles dealing with the circumstances in which alternative proposals may be material considerations when determining planning applications were summarised by Auld LJ in *Mount Cook Land Ltd v Westminster City Council* [2004] 2 P & CR 22. The key points identified in paragraph 30 include that:

a. in the absence of conflict with planning policy and/or other planning harm, the relative advantages of alternative uses on the application site or of the same use on alternative sites are normally irrelevant in planning terms; and
b. even in exceptional circumstances where alternative proposals might be relevant, inchoate or vague schemes and/or those that are unlikely or have no real possibility of coming about would not be relevant or, if they were, should be given little or no weight.

9.34. SODC's case is that the HIF1 scheme is clearly in accordance with the development plan as a whole and is acceptable. Therefore, the prospect of any alternative schemes is irrelevant.

9.35. Even if the various alternatives advanced by the objectors were in principle material considerations, there is a complete lack of detail or evidence as to their feasibility. Crucially, there is no evidence whatsoever to substantiate the suggestion that an alternative scheme which did not include a new road could provide mitigation for the planned housing growth in the DGT area. Mr Tamplin fairly described his evidence on alternatives as a "*back of a fag packet, very simplistic assessment*" and said that he was not putting forward "*any worked up, feasible alternative*".[205] That applies equally to the evidence of other objectors on this issue. The suggested alternatives are all "*inchoate or vague schemes*" that "*have no real possibility of coming about*", and so cannot carry any weight.

9.36. As already mentioned, the SOLP seeks to prioritise active travel modes and ensure that new housing development secures and delivers improvements in walking, cycling and public transport. In a rural area like South Oxfordshire car use will inevitably remain part of the picture. It is clearly unrealistic to suggest that the level of existing and planned growth can be accommodated without new road capacity, given the evidence the Inquiry has heard about the current highway conditions.

9.37. Ms Baker also pointed out that the HIF1 scheme has funding as a result of the competitive bid process, and her understanding was that if the

[205] XX by OCC

HIF1 scheme is not delivered, that funding will be lost.[206] There is of course no suggested funding mechanism to support any of the alternative plans and schemes identified by objectors. Aron Wisdom said that it would be "*completely irresponsible to refuse the well planned widely supported HIF 1 scheme on the basis something may turn up*".[207] SODC agrees with this assessment.

The Green Belt

9.38. Paragraph 155(c) of the NPPF provides that local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location is not inappropriate provided it preserves openness and does not conflict with Green Belt purposes of including land within it.

9.39. There is no dispute that the HIF1 scheme constitutes local transport infrastructure.[208] There has also been no serious challenge to the issue of whether HIF1 can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location. On this point Mr James identified that the "*only dispute is whether the road is necessary*" - but that is not a relevant question under paragraph 155(c). The question is not whether there is a requirement for the development, but whether the development requires a Green Belt location. Clearly it does.

9.40. The key issue between Mr Greep and Ms Bowerman is whether the HIF1 scheme will preserve openness and not conflict with Green Belt purposes, specifically purpose (c). The area of disagreement is narrow, because Ms Bowerman expressly agreed with the logic of Mr Greep's approach. If paragraph 155(c) is to have some purpose and not be self-defeating, some level of local transport infrastructure must be capable of falling within its scope. Given that development of this type will almost inevitably have some impact on openness, the existence of paragraph 155(c) necessarily implies that some degree of impact must be acceptable.

9.41. The question of where the tipping point lies is a matter of planning judgement. Ms Bowerman judges that elements of the HIF1 scheme which lie within the Green Belt would have impacts on openness and purposes which go beyond that tipping point. Mr Greep takes the opposite view. These are both legitimate professional judgements.

Very special circumstances

9.42. If the SoS agrees with Ms Bowerman's judgement on paragraph 155(c), it follows that the HIF1 scheme (insofar as it is located in the Green Belt) is inappropriate development. Such development is harmful by definition, and that harm must be given substantial weight.

[206] Emma Baker EiC for VoWHDC

[207] Aron Wisdom in EiC

[208] Although Mr Woolley cross examined Mr Greep on whether the difference between 'local' and 'strategic' was a "verbal matter", he did not positively advance a case that HIF1 was not "local transport infrastructure"; and Mr James agreed that it was.

9.43. Ms Bowerman's assessment is that the substantial public benefits of the HIF1 scheme clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm. There can be no doubt that very special circumstances exist. Her planning judgement on this issue was not challenged by the Rule 6 objectors. Mr James, on behalf of NPCJC confirmed that "*if it is concluded that a level of housing development that is sustainable cannot go ahead without HIF1 or some sections of it, then it would be a valid conclusion that VSC exist*".

9.44. It is not for this Inquiry to consider what level of housing growth is '*sustainable*', or what infrastructure needs to be planned for to support the delivery of the planned growth. Those are matters which have been fully assessed through the Local Plan examination. The plan was found to be sound. It necessarily follows that the level of housing growth planned for the Science Vale is sustainable. Therefore, on the Rule 6 objectors' own case, the Green Belt impact does not constitute a reason for refusing planning permission.

9.45. Ms Bowerman expressed the view that it would be a "bizarre" situation if exceptional circumstances existed to justify removing the land at STRAT 8, 9 and 10i from the Green Belt, but the infrastructure needed to deliver those allocations were prevented due to its Green Belt location. Mr Greep agreed with that argument.

Other Matters Relevant to the Planning Balance

Matters raised by SODC's Full Council

9.46. On 29 August 2023 the Full Council of SODC resolved to ensure that its views were properly represented at the Inquiry and identified a number of issues which it particularly wished to address, as follows:

i. The importance of infrastructure funded by HIF1 to the delivery of housing and economic sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan 2035
ii. South Oxfordshire's target of becoming a net zero district by 2030.
iii. The need for high quality design throughout, as set out in the Design Guide and the DGTDP.
iv. Minimising the harmful impact of any scheme on our natural and historic landscape, including the River Thames, and maximising biodiversity.
v. Respecting the views of affected communities including both Didcot and the surrounding villages.

9.47. Point (i) has been addressed above by reference to the need and benefits of the Scheme. Points (ii)-(iv) are discussed in this section. As to point (v), the Inquiry has heard from the affected communities both through the Rule 6 objectors and also through individuals who have attended and spoken for and against the Scheme, in addition to the written representations and consultation responses. SODC respects all of these

views. The position it has taken in response to the HIF1 scheme is in accordance with its own adopted policies and is judged to best serve the interests of all residents.

Climate and sustainability

9.48. Policy DES 8 requires new developments to *se*ek to minimise the carbon and energy impacts of their design and construction and demonstrate they are seeking to limit GHG emissions. Mr Lansburgh's evidence, on behalf of the applicant, was that during the construction phase HIF1 will have minor adverse (not significant) effects in terms of GHG emissions. However, once operational the HIF1 scheme is estimated to reduce GHG emissions compared to the baseline scenario, with a minor beneficial effect on emissions.[209] That was not undermined by Dr Ng's evidence.

9.49. As set out in Ms Bowerman's proof, SODC welcomes proposed conditions 24 and 35 relating to carbon management plans. Ms Bowerman confirmed her assessment that, with such conditions, the HIF1 scheme complies with Policy DES 8.

High quality design

9.50. Policy DES 1 provides that all new development must be of high-quality design, whilst Policy DES 2 requires development to physically and visually enhance and complement and respond to the site and its surroundings.

9.51. In applying these policies, it has to be borne in mind that HIF1 is a road scheme and must meet relevant technical and safety specifications. Form is to a very large extent dictated by function. The Scheme will by its very nature have an engineered appearance in places - particularly in the short term.

9.52. SODC's landscape officer raised some concerns about the design of the Science Bridge (which is close to, but outside, SODC's area). Ms Bowerman described the bridge as "*a bit of a missed opportunity*", although it was clear from Mr Blanchard's evidence that there were several constraints relating to the design of the structure.

9.53. Concern was also raised about the Thames Crossing bridge and viaduct, in particular the bulky appearance of the supports. Again, Ms Bowerman recognised that the bridge will inevitably be engineered in appearance. She was satisfied that a landmark feature would not be appropriate in this rural setting.

9.54. Recommended condition 8 would require the submission and approval of details of the external appearance of both bridges, which would provide an opportunity to ensure that the materials, finishes and colours used will enhance the appearance of the Science Bridge and reduce the prominence of the Thames Crossing as far as possible. Ms Bowerman's

[209] Chris Landsburgh proof para 2.25 p. 8

overall view was that the design of both bridges was acceptable and would not result in any policy conflict.

Landscape impact and biodiversity

9.55. Policy ENV 1 seeks to protect South Oxfordshire's landscape, countryside and rural areas from harmful development, and requires development to protect and where possible enhance features that contribute to the nature and quality of the landscape. Policy DES 2 is to similar effect, requiring development to be designed to reflect the positive features that make up the character of the local area and enhance and complement the surroundings.

9.56. SODC's landscape officer concluded that the HIF1 scheme would conflict with these policies. Jane Ash, giving landscape evidence on behalf of OCC, concluded that after 15 years, the HIF1 scheme would have a residual moderate adverse impact on the landscape character of the site itself, and residual moderate or large adverse effects on visual amenity on 11 out of 48 representative viewpoints.[210]

9.57. Specific concerns were raised by SODC's landscape officer about the road design around the CSC roundabout, although semi-mature trees could have an immediate effect in softening the appearance of the Scheme in this location.[211] There are a range of planning conditions that could be used to control landscaping and mitigate the visual impact of the Scheme.

9.58. It is clear that there will be a significant amount of tree loss initially. But OCC's Arboricultural Impact assessment confirms that after 10 years the level of canopy cover within the site will be between 13 and 17%, compared with the baseline level of 14%.[212]

9.59. Ms Bowerman's assessment is that any road scheme proposed in the rural area (i.e. north of the River Thames) would have an adverse effect in character and appearance, and that this is something that was expected through the inclusion of HIF1 in the SOLP. The policy conflict is inevitable. It is something that needs to be weighed against the benefits of the Scheme in the overall planning balance.

9.60. So far as biodiversity is concerned, recommended condition 13 would secure the 10% BNG which would meet the requirements of Policy ENV 3.

Heritage

9.61. There is a suite of local plan policies relating to the protection of heritage assets. Policies ENV 6, 7, 8, and 10 of the SOLP are relevant as well as Policy CUL 6 of the Culham Neighbourhood Plan. Overall, they reflect the

[210] Jane Ash proof tables 4.1 and 4.2 p19-20.
[211] Emma Bowerman proof paragraph 4.34
[212] **CD C.2** EIA Reg 25 response appendix H pdf 8-9

requirements of national policy on this issue. The NPPF requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.[213]

9.62. The expert heritage evidence submitted to the Inquiry by Gillian Scott concludes that there would be less than substantial harm to the Grade II listed Fullamoor Farmhouse and to the Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area.[214] There would also be low level less than substantial harm to Clifton Hampden Conservation Area - but only until the landscaping matures.

9.63. SODC's conservation officer took a slightly different view. In the last set of comments dated 20 June 2023 she concluded that there would be less than substantial harm to the significance of Fullamoor Farmhouse and the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area during construction. However her view was that, as long as the acoustic and landscape mitigation could be achieved, there would be a beneficial effect in the long term. This is because the HIF1 scheme would "*take vehicles and lighting further away from the heritage assets*".[215]

9.64. The Rule 6 objectors have not sought to argue that the HIF1 scheme should be refused on the basis of its impact on heritage assets. In fact, the only person who discussed the issue during the Inquiry was Professor Airs. His position was predicated on assumptions about the level of traffic increase through Nuneham Courtenay which OCC have disputed.

9.65. Any less than substantial harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the Scheme. Ms Bowerman was in no doubt that the considerable benefits of the HIF1 scheme outweigh such harm. The heritage balance falls to be struck decisively in favour of the Scheme.

Other matters

9.66. OCC has presented expert evidence on a large number of technical topics, including transport modelling, highways engineering, noise and air quality. SODC has not sought to call evidence or cross examine on these issues and does not make any detailed submissions on them. However, SODC has considered the written evidence submitted on these topics and has listened carefully to the oral evidence. SODC's view is that OCC's evidence on these issues has not been undermined in any material way by evidence or questioning from the Rule 6 objectors and should be accepted.

Consequences of Refusing Permission For HIF1

9.67. Based on the evidence about the existing highway network and the releasing development strategy, it is probable that OCC will return to a position of objecting to new traffic-generating development.[216] If SODC

[213] NPPF Paragraph 205

[214] See Bernard Greep's appendix 2.4

[215] **CD L.4** SODC SoC appendix 1, pdf 43

[216] This prevented proposals for even single dwellings in 2018 and 2019 ref, and Steven Sensecall's evidence

determines applications in accordance with that position, it would effectively amount to a moratorium on growth in the DGT area - precisely where the SOLP seeks to focus growth. As Mr Butler rightly pointed out, it would of course be possible for both Districts to continue permitting housing growth, notwithstanding objections from OCC, if it were judged that the benefits of housing outweigh the conflict with transport policies. The consequences of that approach have been clearly explained in OCC's transport evidence.

9.68. There will be significant implications for SODC's housing land supply position. SODC does not currently have a 5 year housing land supply.[217] Ms Bowerman explained that SODC has had previous experience of working in this situation and the result has been a significant amount of speculative development, focussed on those towns and villages within the relatively unconstrained area between the Green Belt and the Chilterns National Landscape. Although the large strategic sites which depend on HIF1 are not presently relied on within the 5 year housing land supply, they are expected to contribute to the housing land supply position in future years.[218] If those developments can no longer come forward, that important contribution will be lost. This will simply prolong the period during which a 5 year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated, with predictable results. Furthermore, speculative development at towns and villages is inherently less sustainable than delivery of new sustainable settlements in the Science Vale which are well located in terms of jobs and transport. A dispersed pattern of development results in greater reliance on the private car, together with the associated congestion and emissions.

9.69. The emerging JLP proposes to continue with the strategy of focussing growth on Didcot and the Science Vale (and carries forward the important HIF1-dependent strategic allocations), supported by the delivery of HIF1.[219] If permission is refused, that preferred spatial strategy will not be deliverable and the Districts will have to reconsider the strategy of the emerging JLP. This is bound to delay the production of the plan.

9.70. Finally, Ms Bowerman observed that there may be implications for public confidence in the planning system, if the infrastructure which is needed to support planned growth cannot be delivered – particularly bearing in mind that some of the growth which HIF1 was supposed to mitigate has already been delivered.

[217] Emma Bowerman confirmed in EiC the current published position is 4.2 years, the most recent appeal-derived position is 3.49 years.
[218] Emma Baker EiC for SODC
[219] CD G.18 draft policy IN3 p. 503

Overall Planning Balance

9.71. Only Mr Tamplin sought to identify an inconsistency between the SOLP and the NPPF.[220] His argument was that any plan which supports road building is inconsistent with paragraph 115 NPPF. He contended that the inconsistency arose due to the climate emergency. Mr Tamplin did not identify which specific policies he considered to be inconsistent with paragraph 115 NPPF. Paragraph 226 NPPF makes clear that inconsistency is judged by reference to policies and not the plan as a whole. Presumably the policies in question would be those which provide support for the delivery of HIF1, most obviously TRANS 1b and TRANS 3.

9.72. Mr Tamplin's argument was flawed for several reasons:

a. Paragraph 115 is found under the heading "*considering development proposals*" and thus it applies to the determination of planning applications rather than guiding the content of strategic policies.

b. In any event the "*residual cumulative impacts*" referred to in paragraph 115 do not relate to climate change, rather – as the policy states – the concern is with impacts "*on the road network*". This largely relates to the performance of the road network and its ability to accommodate forecast traffic. The topic of climate change is addressed separately by the NPPF in chapter 14.

c. The wording currently found in para 115 NPPF has remained unchanged, albeit with different paragraph numbering, since the wholesale revision of the NPPF in 2018. The SOLP was examined in 2020 and found sound – and therefore consistent with national policy.

d. The issue of climate change was expressly considered by the Examining Inspector in the context of the level of housing growth which was being planned for (and which, as discussed, depends on infrastructure including HIF1).[221] Furthermore, a lengthy appendix of the SOLP "*outlines the ways in which the policies and proposals within the Plan seek to address climate change in accordance with the legislative framework as at June 2020*". [222]

9.73. No other areas of inconsistency have been identified by any witness. The SOLP is a recently adopted local plan and all of the policies which are important for the determination of this application are up to date. It follows that each policy is deserving of full weight.

[220] Mr Turnbull confirmed in XX by SODC that his separate point about paragraph 116 NPPF did not apply to the SOLP, and he did not identify any other areas of inconsistency affecting the SOLP.
[221] CD G.1.8 paragraph 51
[222] CD G.1.0 SOLP Appendix 16 p297, wording taken from introductory text.

Whether HIF1 is in accordance with the development plan

9.74. The Rule 6 objectors have not mounted any real argument that that the HIF1 scheme conflicts with the development plan. Mr Tamplin accepted that HIF1 is in accordance with SOLP,[223] and Mr Turnbull did not identify any conflict with SOLP policies. The HIF1 scheme is fundamental to the spatial strategy and thus it is no surprise that the Scheme receives strong in-principle support from the development plan.

9.75. There is some low level less than substantial harm to heritage assets which must be given great weight, but the substantial public benefits outweigh that harm so that local and national heritage policies are complied with.

9.76. The HIF1 scheme is inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that definitional harm must be given substantial weight, but the benefits of the Scheme clearly outweigh it and any other harm, and very special circumstances exist. Thus there is compliance with local and national policy on the Green Belt. There is some conflict with policies ENV 1 and DES 2 due to the landscape and visual impact of the HIF1 scheme, but that is inevitable for a scheme of this nature and is reasonably localised.

9.77. There is no conflict with any of the policies in the Culham Neighbourhood Plan.[224]

9.78. Ms Bowerman's assessment is that the HIF1 scheme is in accordance with the development plan taken as a whole, and that there are no material considerations which indicate permission should be refused.

Conclusions

9.79. For all of the above reasons, SODC contends that there is a very strong case for granting planning permission to allow this essential infrastructure to be delivered, so that it can perform its role in unlocking important housing and employment development and delivering the spatial strategy.

9.80. SODC therefore respectfully invites the Inspector to recommend that the application is granted.

[223] XX by SODC

[224] Emma Bowerman EiC

10. The Case for UKAEA (Rule 6 Party)

[This summary of the case for the UKAEA is based on the closing submissions, the proofs of evidence and other submissions to the Inquiry.]

10.1. The UKAEA appeared at this Inquiry because the development of the UKAEA's headquarters at the CSC is one of the foremost examples of why the Scheme is needed now.

10.2. This position has been confirmed through the UKAEA's evidence to this Inquiry. Planning permission for the Scheme must be granted now to unlock the future development of the CSC and the national benefits which that development will deliver. If planning permission is not granted for the Scheme, those benefits will be stifled and may be lost altogether. The Scheme is long overdue, even more so after this Inquiry. Any further delay would be intolerable, both for the UKAEA, the fusion sector in this country and for Oxfordshire.

10.3. There has been no meaningful challenge to the UKAEA's evidence. The objectors to the Scheme did not cross-examine two of the UKAEA's witnesses and the questions that were put to Professor Sir Ian Chapman disclosed no credible or coherent arguments against the UKAEA's case. There was also a failure by the objectors to present any credible evidence against the UKAEA's position. To the extent that the objectors' evidence dealt with the UKAEA's case and the CSC, it was obviously flawed. Essentially a single argument was advanced, namely that there were alternative public transport solutions which would allow further development at the CSC. Like the objectors' wider arguments about alternative solutions, this argument was flawed in multiple respects.

10.4. It follows that the UKAEA's evidence has demonstrated that planning permission should be granted for the Scheme without delay for the following four key reasons:

Reason 1 – There are existing highway capacity constraints on the highway network around the CSC.

Reason 2 - The Scheme is necessary to unlock the planned redevelopment of the CSC. There are no alternatives, either to the need for development of the CSC or to the Scheme.

Reason 3 – The future development of the CSC, in accordance with the UKAEA's masterplan, exemplifies sustainable development and will deliver a range of national benefits.

Reason 4 – The planning balance is overwhelmingly in favour of the grant of planning permission for the Scheme. The objectors accept that the Scheme complies with the development plan as a whole.[225]

10.5. The fact of accordance with the development plan demonstrates that whatever the Scheme's impacts – whether as assessed by OCC or as

[225] XX of Mr Tamplin by SODC.

claimed by objectors – they are acceptable, in the round, when assessed against the relevant planning policy. Accordingly, the Scheme benefits from the statutory presumption in favour of the grant of planning permission and there are no other material considerations which justify a decision contrary to the development plan. As such planning permission should be granted for the Scheme.

Reason 1 – There are existing unacceptable capacity constraints on the highway network around the CSC.

10.6. The evidence before the Inquiry demonstrates unequivocally that there are existing unacceptable capacity constraints on the highway network around the CSC. Mr Foxall identified nine junctions near to the CSC which are already operating over capacity, of which four restrict flows over the two existing river crossings located at Clifton Hampden and Culham.[226] The capacity exceedances at these junctions which Mr Foxall has identified are significant, being well over the 90% target.

10.7. Further, Mr Foxall's technical evidence was consistent with the evidence of local people, for example Mr Pryor and Mr Alcantra. Indeed, even objectors identified the unacceptability of the present position. For example, Ms Casey-Rerhaye, on behalf of the NPCJC, complained about congestion in Culham and identified a need for improvements.[227] Her qualification that this was only at peak hours does not detract from the situation. The assessment of peak hour traffic flows is precisely the approach which must be adopted as a matter of best practice.

10.8. The only person who disputed Mr Foxall's conclusion that there are existing capacity constraints on the local highway network was Mr James, on behalf of NPCJC. Mr James' argument was flawed in multiple respects. In particular:

- Mr James founded his argument on an addendum transport assessment dated 24 November 2021 (ATA1) which was prepared in support of an application by UKAEA for planning permission for a new Research and Development building in the Campus.[228]
- ATA1 was superseded by a further addendum transport assessment dated 31 March 2022 (ATA2) in respect of the same building. Mr James was not aware of ATA2 when he prepared his written evidence. He did not address ATA2 in his Evidence in Chief and had not considered ATA2 and the differences to ATA1 before giving his oral evidence.
- ATA2 concludes that there are existing capacity issues on the highway network which are unacceptable. For example, ATA2 identifies existing

[226] Mr Foxhall's POE at paragraphs 2.9 and 2.10
[227] Ms Casey-Rerhaye's POE at paragraphs 2, 10 and 13. .

[228] INQ 15.1

capacity issues at the access to the CSC, at the Clifton Hampden signals and the Culham river crossing signals.[229]

10.9. The analysis in ATA2 was different to the analysis in ATA1. For example, in respect of the Clifton Hampden signals ATA2 identified a need for further mitigation, including from the Scheme, which had not been identified in ATA1.[230] These are material differences which represent a finding of greater adverse capacity constraints than those identified in ATA1. Again, these were matters which Mr James overlooked.

10.10. Mr James misunderstood the scope of ATA1. ATA1 was an assessment of the impact of the proposed Research and Development building only and not an assessment of the impact of all the development shown in the Framework Masterplan or all the development planned for in Policy STRAT8. It follows that ATA1 is not evidence that the CSC can be redeveloped acceptably without the delivery of the Scheme. Rather, it only demonstrated the acceptability of the delivery of the Research and Development building and, even then, in the longer term forecasts the Scheme was taken into account as necessary mitigation.[231]

10.11. Accordingly, the correct conclusion is that there are existing capacity constraints on the local highway network near the CSC. Further, the degree of constraint – i.e. the existing levels of congestion – is already unacceptable.

10.12. In light of this conclusion, the objectors' argument about the veracity of the transport modelling undertaken by the applicant is a red herring. UKAEA's case is based on existing, recorded, constraints, not future modelled constraints. The fact that the constraints will only get worse without intervention reinforces UKAEA's case but it is not an essential component of its argument.

Reason 2 - The Scheme is necessary to unlock the planned redevelopment of the CSC. There are no alternatives, either to the need for development of the CSC or to the Scheme.

10.13. The CSC was removed from the Green Belt by Policies STRAT6 and STRAT8 of the SOLP for the express purpose of allowing the strategic redevelopment of the CSC. The principle of significant future development at the CSC is enshrined in the development plan. It is also supported by national policy in the UK's Fusion Strategy.

10.14. Policy STRAT8 expressly supports the redevelopment and intensification of the CSC. The development envisaged by Policy STRAT8 is ambitious. The allocation is some 77 hectares. The redevelopment and intensification of the campus must deliver at least a net increase in employment land of 7.3 hectares (when combined with adjoining land)–

[229] INQ 15.2 – ATA2 at Table 6.13 on PDF p. 68, rows 1, 2 and 7.
[230] INQ 15.2 – ATA2 at Table 6.13 on PDF p. 68, rows 2.
[231] INQ 15.1 – ATA1 – At Table 7.15 on PDF p. 50 – see final column having regard to the Scheme.

the second largest single employment allocation in the SOLP. The adjacent land is allocated for c. 3,500 homes by Policy STRAT9 – the largest single housing allocation in the SOLP.

10.15. UKAEA's ambitions for the development of the CSC are set out in the Framework Masterplan. As Mr Sensecall explained, the Framework Masterplan envisages comprehensive redevelopment through to 2050 on a continuous basis. The Framework Masterplan is aligned with Policy STRAT8 (as well as the other relevant policies of the SOLP). There is alignment between the Framework Masterplan and the UK's Fusion Strategy, the latter of which is particularly ambitious for future development in the national interest at the CSC. To that end, the Government has committed funding of c. £184 million via the Fusion Foundations Programme to support the transformation of the CSC, as envisaged in the Framework Masterplan. Further, the UKAEA is already working closely with SODC and OCC (as local highways authority) on the drafting of a LDO to facilitate the delivery of the ambition in the Framework Masterplan.[232]

Need for the Scheme

10.16. The planned redevelopment of the CSC, as shown in the Framework Masterplan and planned for in Policy STRAT8, cannot be accommodated within the existing highway network.[233] Recent planning permissions for development within the CSC have only been granted because the UKAEA has traded floorspace, i.e. it has given up some already permitted development in order to allow other development to be permitted. This approach has been necessitated because of the inadequate road infrastructure which serves the CSC. The trading of floorspace is an interim solution dependent based on maintaining the status quo, rather than a long-term solution for planned future growth.

10.17. The SOLP explains the CSCs' specific need for the Scheme:

'[Culham Campus] cannot expand without necessary infrastructure, including the Didcot to Culham Rover Crossing and Clifton Hampden Bypass'.[234]

The development plan also explains the importance of the Scheme to the delivery of growth across the Science Vale. This is a strategic priority for the County.

10.18. The only solution to the inadequate highway capacity near the CSC is the Scheme. Mr Foxall has considered each of the alternative solutions and none are adequate. In particular:

- The physical constraints on the relevant junctions prevent meaningful changes to the layout and/or operation of those junctions in order to

[232] Mr Sensecall's POE at paragraph 1.7.
[233] Mr Foxall's POE at paragraphs 2.15 and 2.17.
[234] CD G.01.00 at paragraph 3.67

increase their capacity. This is especially the case in respect of three of the four junctions near the CSC.[235]

- Since June 2021, OCC has implemented an interim strategy.[236] The planned redevelopment of the CSC – in accordance with STRAT8 and the Framework Masterplan – is not possible under this interim strategy.

10.19. UKAEA has already made contributions towards public transport improvements. The provision of further financial contributions towards enhanced public transport provision will not provide sufficient mitigation for the delivery of all the planned redevelopment at the CSC. Further and critically, the public transport improvements funded by such contributions need to be deliverable, but the evidence before this Inquiry – in particular from the Oxford Bus Company – demonstrates that meaningful public transport improvements are not feasible in the absence of the Scheme. Additional cycling and walking provision improvements also require further infrastructure that will only be delivered by the Scheme.

10.20. Not only is the Scheme necessary to address the overarching issue of highway capacity, but it is also necessary to deliver three of UKAEA's specific objectives for the redevelopment of the CSC.

- First, the planned growth at CSC requires the construction of a second entrance/exit and this is integrated into the Scheme, specifically the Clifton Hampden by-pass. This has been agreed as the most appropriate approach with OCC.
- Secondly, the modal shift that is a fundamental part of UKAEA's vision for the CSC is dependent on the new walking and cycling provision that is part of the Scheme.
- Thirdly, the Scheme will enable the delivery of a new main entrance to the CSC which is more befitting of its status as a world leading science and technology campus. Planning permission for this entrance has already been granted by SODC but completion of the new entrance is dependent on the Scheme given the land shared between the developments.

It follows that the Scheme is needed to unlock the planned redevelopment of the CSC. There is no other feasible solution.

The flaws in the objectors' case on alternatives

10.21. The starting point is to understand the correct approach to arguments based on alternatives. The legal principles are well established and were highlighted by UKAEA, as well as other parties to the Inquiry.[237] The

[235] Mr Foxall's POE paragraph 2.19
[236] Releasing Development Strategy in Didcot and surrounding villages in the vicinity of HIF1 Schemes
[237] For example, INQ1 paragraph 23 and INQ7 paragraph 21.

objectors have acted contrary to those well-established principles and behaved unreasonably as a result.[238] The UKAEA reiterates the following principles:

- The only statutory provision which requires consideration of alternatives in this case is reg. 18(3)(d) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ("the EIA Regulations"). That provision requires an ES to include a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen. OCC, as applicant, has plainly complied with this duty. Notably the objectors did not cross-examine Mr Maddox on this point.

- Aside from this statutory provision, an alternative scheme (or site) will only be a material consideration in exceptional circumstances.[239] However, even in exceptional circumstances, where alternative proposals might be relevant, inchoate or vague schemes and/or those that are unlikely or have no real possibility of coming about would not be relevant.[240]

10.22. The objectors advance three alternative arguments. The first argument is that there is one (or more) alternatives to the Scheme. The second argument is that the UKAEA should locate its development elsewhere. The third argument is that there are alternative transport solutions which can unlock the planned redevelopment of the CSC. Applying the correct approach. Each and every one of these arguments is unreasonable and flawed for the following reasons:

- First, the objectors have not identified – or even attempted to identify – the necessary exceptional circumstances to require consideration of alternatives to the Scheme.

- Secondly and in any event, the alternatives relied on by objectors are vague and inchoate, and there is no evidence that any of them will come forward. This was accepted in terms by Mr Tamplin and Mr Williams.[241] It is also confirmed by the multiplicity of different suggestions made: there is no single, evidenced alternative; rather objectors have simply made a multiplicity of generalised statements. This applies with even greater force to the alternative arguments about the development of CSC.

- Thirdly, the objectors' case on alternatives was not based on any identified alternative, but instead on the contention that alternatives needed to be investigated again. This is untenable: there is no deficiency in the analysis already undertaken and repetition of that analysis would only engender further delay. During that time the

[238] PPG: Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 16-031-20140306 and Paragraph: 056 Reference ID: 16-056-20161210
[239] ***R. (Mount Cook Land Ltd) v Westminster City Council*** [2003] EWCA Civ 1346, [2017] PTSR 1166 per Auld LJ at [30].
[240] Ibid.
[241] XX by OCC

already unacceptable congestion – including in Culham – would persist. This is a situation that is in nobody's interest, not even the objectors to the Scheme.

- Fourthly, the specific arguments about the CSC were based on basic misunderstandings of the UKAEA's work and redevelopment aspirations. The suggestion that the UKAEA either could, or should, move its operations elsewhere is untenable, as Professor Sir Ian Chapman explained. To do so would be to lose all of the benefits inherent in the existing work at the campus and to lose all the benefits of clustering.

10.23. Equally, the suggested reliance on public transport to unlock the development of the CSC is untenable. The UKAEA already has an ambitious travel plan that is aligned with the LTCP. None of the objectors identified any deficiency in the travel plan. Indeed, Mr James considered it to take modal shift "*very seriously*". Even with this ambition, the Scheme remains necessary, as both the travel plan itself makes clear and as Mr Foxall explained. This is particularly the case in respect of improvements to bus and train services. Bus services will only improve when the congestion is resolved, such that they are commercially attractive. Train services will only improve when patronage increases, but that itself requires further housing – something which only the Scheme can unlock. This is specifically the case in respect of Culham, as Policy STRAT9 expressly acknowledges.

10.24. Finally, the suggestion of working from home more, showed a gross misunderstanding of the UKAEA's work, in particular the need for employees to be on site to collaborate on the ongoing research projects.

10.25. It follows that there are no alternatives, either to the need for development of the CSC or to the Scheme. The Scheme is necessary to unlock the planned redevelopment of the CSC.

Reason 3 – The future development of the CSC, in accordance with the UKAEA's masterplan, exemplifies sustainable development and will deliver a range of national benefits.

10.26. By permitting the Scheme now, the future development of the CSC will be unlocked and substantial national benefits will be secured through the future growth of what is already a facility of national – as well as international – significance.

10.27. The CSC covers some 80 hectares, was conceived, planned and built as a whole in the mid 1960s.[242] The laboratory today remains largely as it existed then: the original complex of building still extends to approximately 59,000m^2. The UKAEA has embarked on a programme of redevelopment, but there is still a long way to go in order to deliver the facilities which the UKAEA, Oxfordshire and the UK require.

[242] Mr Sensecall's POE at [4.4] on PDF p. 11.

10.28. The CSC is at the centre of fusion development globally.[243] Not only is the CSC the headquarters of the UKAEA, the largest fusion research organisation in the world, but it is also the home to a range of globally unique facilities.[244] As a result, the CSC is the "go to" place for both fusion research and private fusion companies, with private fusion companies already located at the Campus, and more deciding to move to the Campus.[245] Professor Sir Ian Chapman explained to the Inquiry that these companies encompass both innovative start-ups and some of the biggest commercial players in the sector.[246] At present some 3,400 people are employed at the CSC, across all the organisations, of which 2,400 are employed by UKAEA.[247] This level of employment is forecast to rise to 5,000 with the planned development of the campus.[248]

10.29. The importance of this future development at CSC has been confirmed very recently in a letter directly to this Inquiry from the former SoS for Energy Security and Net Zero.[249] The former SoS considers that the CSC '*is key to our global advantage'* and that its development is entirely consistent with the UK's Fusion Strategy. The former SoS also explained this position in earlier correspondence with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities about OCC's resolution to refuse planning permission.

10.30. The development plan also recognises that the CSC 'is the leading UK centre for fusion research and technology and is of international importance'; with commensurate policy support for its growth. SODC has stated: 'The Council recognises the key role of the [Culham Campus] site and supports and encourages its redevelopment'.

The benefits of redevelopment at the CSC

10.31. The benefits of the redevelopment at the CSC are numerous and were not meaningfully challenged by objectors. In particular:

- Redevelopment at the CSC is an exemplar of sustainable development. The redevelopment will use previously developed land in a sustainable location.
- Further, the redevelopment of the CSC is the first step in ensuring the co-location of high-quality jobs and high quality homes, as envisaged by policies STRAT8 and STRAT9, which ensure the co-location of significant employment and housing growth at Culham.
- The redevelopment at the CSC is an important driver of the Science Vale. The Science Vale is recognised as '*an international location for science and technology'* which should '*continue to grow as a world-*

[243] Professor Sir Ian Chapman's POE at [1.4] on PDF p. 4.
[244] Professor Sir Ian Chapman's POE at [1.5] on PDF p. 4.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Professor Sir Ian Chapman's POE at [5.1] on PDF p. 9 and [7.2] on PDF p. 10.
[247] Professor Sir Ian Chapman in XX.
[248] Professor Sir Ian Chapman's POE at PDF p. 31.
[249] CD N18.

renowned science, research and innovation hub that attracts business, creates job opportunities and delivers housing growth'. [250]This ambition is embedded in the overarching vision and objectives of the development plan;[251] and it is made real by the strategic policies in the development plan which make the Science Vale the focus for major new development, including specifically at Culham.[252]

- The work of the UKAEA at the CSC is a cornerstone of the UK's Fusion Strategy. The UKAEA is at the forefront of research into unlimited and climate resilient energy creation. The fusion research programme at the CSC is truly a world leader in managing the environmental effects of humankind.
- The CSC is a significant driver of inward investment into the UK and into the County specifically. This includes both public investment – such as the significant Government funding for the transformation of the campus – and also private investment – for example through the more than 40 private companies who have chosen – and are continuing to choose – to locate at the CSC as part of the growing fusion cluster.
- Linked to this investment, the redevelopment of the CSC will deliver significant employment benefits. This is expressly recognised in the SOLP which considers the growth of the campus to support 'the objective to increase the number of high-quality jobs in the District'.

Taken together, this is a package of benefits which are truly of a national and international scale. However, critically, this is a package of benefits which will only be realised in full when the redevelopment of the CSC is unlocked by the Scheme.

The Secretary of State's first and second questions

10.32. The Scheme is consistent in all respects with the Government's policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes in the NPPF. As the District Councils have explained, it is only through the delivery of the Scheme that the necessary planned housing growth can be delivered. Accordingly, the Scheme is the only way to significantly boost the supply of homes in the County, in accordance with paragraph 60 of the NPPF. Further, focussing on Culham specifically, the delivery of STRAT9, adjacent to the CSC, with employment and housing co-located, is an exemplar sustainable housing development, in accordance with paragraphs 74 of the NPPF.

10.33. The Scheme is also consistent in all respects with the Government's policies for building a strong and competitive economy. The Scheme satisfies Chapter 6 of the NPPF. The unlocking of future development at

[250] CD G0.1.00 at [2.29] on PDF p. 29 and [2.5] on DPF p. 13.
[251] CD G0.1.00 at PDF pp. 13 – 14 – see in particular the desire for a '*prosperous place to live'* in the vision to 2035 and objective 1.4 (growth of Science Vale).
[252] Policy STRAT1 which specifically refers to the Science Vale and Culham

the CSC exemplifies this consistency with the NPPF. For example, in respect of the overarching objective in paragraph 85:

- The UKAEA and its associated cluster businesses can only invest, expand, and adapt at the CSC if the Scheme is delivered. The Scheme is a necessary pre-condition to this economic development.
- There is a clear national need for the UKAEA and its associated cluster businesses to grow. This need attracts significant weight, as does the Scheme which is the only realistic way to meet that need.
- The Science Vale – of which the CSC is a principal part – is an area of scientific innovation and strength. It should be allowed to grow, and the Scheme is necessary to remove the barriers to this growth.
- The work of the UKAEA at the CSC is an area in which Britain is already a global leader. That position of strength can only be furthered and protected for the long term through the growth of the CSC, an objective which depends on the Scheme.

10.34. Further, the delivery of the Scheme is in accordance with paragraph 86 of the NPPF (especially sub-paragraphs (a) and (c)):

- The development plan contains a clear vision to support growth in the Science Vale. However, that policy vision can only be delivered by the development of the Scheme. The CSC sits at the heart of the Science Vale and is a key driver to its success, but its redevelopment to achieve the planned objectives is dependent on the Scheme.
- The transport infrastructure – both in terms of highway capacity and to support sustainable transport - is a barrier to investment in the County. This is exemplified by the CSC: funding has been secured for its redevelopment, but this funding can only be utilised if the necessary infrastructure is in place to facilitate that redevelopment.

10.35. Finally, the role of the Scheme in unlocking the redevelopment of the CSC is in accordance with paragraph 87 of the NPPF. The need to redevelop the CSC is a good example of a sector having specific locational requirements, including the development of clusters, which are specifically contemplated by the NPPF. The Campus is an established global centre in the fusion sector and the benefit of its redevelopment, in particular the clustering of the UKAEA's research with others operating in the fusion sector, cannot be realised in another location. The proposal is also consistent with the draft NPPF consultation in that the Didcot Garden Town HIF roads are an obvious example of plan-led infrastructure which will unlock land for thousands of new homes and significant investment in scientific research and employment.

10.36. The only challenge to the UKAEA's case on this issue was from Mr Kirby who asserted that the UKAEA had not fairly reflected the challenges facing fusion. Mr Kirby was in error. Professor Sir Ian Chapman's POE is clear about the considerable scientific and engineering challenges in delivering fusion. Further, Mr Kirby's representations failed to consider two critical factors: first, the advances in fusion science and technology over recent years, coupled with the advanced manufacturing and computing capabilities now available, mean that fusion energy is closer than ever before; and secondly, the national benefits which the CSC is already delivering, and will continue to deliver if future redevelopment is unlocked, arise from the scientific and engineering endeavour which is already underway and which the planned redevelopment will further.

10.37. The UKAEA is at the forefront of planning for climate change and energy resilience. Fusion energy, and its derivative research, is game changing for energy production. The activities on CSC – which are directly supported by the Didcot Garden Town HIF roads fall clearly into the Government's strategy for planning for climate change as set out in the new draft NPPF paragraphs 161 and 164.

Reason 4 – The planning balance is overwhelmingly in favour of the grant of planning permission for the Scheme.

10.38. There is apparent agreement that the Scheme accords with the development plan, read as a whole. The objectors to the Scheme have not even contested this critical point or submitted any contrary evidence. It follows that the answer to the SoS's third question must be that the Scheme is consistent with the development plan for the area.

10.39. This conclusion is significant because the development plan contains a range of policies for assessing the acceptability of the Scheme's different impacts, including those on local residents and the environment. In circumstances where there is compliance with that range of policies, the only proper conclusion must be that the impacts of the Scheme are acceptable. Accordingly, whatever the various matters raised by objectors, these are all immaterial in the final planning balance because the Scheme's impacts are acceptable when assessed against the adopted standards.

10.40. Compliance with the development plan, read as a whole, is also significant because the Scheme benefits from a statutory presumption in favour of the grant of planning permission. This is consistent with the raft of strategic policies which lend strong and unequivocal support to the delivery of the Scheme.

10.41. In the final planning balance, faced with the statutory presumption in favour of granting planning permission for the Scheme, the objectors have relied on two, allegedly countervailing, matters.

10.42. The first of those matters is the argument about alternatives. That argument is flawed and must be accorded no weight for the reasons

already explained. Indeed, the absence of any better alternative positively supports the Scheme.

10.43. The second matter is the extent to which the delivery of the Scheme is consistent with the attainment of net zero and the decarbonisation of the transport network. This argument is also flawed and must be afforded no weight for the following reasons:

- First, the objectors' argument was considered and rejected at the Examination in Public into the SOLP. Consistency in decision making requires the same conclusion here as the objectors have not shown – or even attempted to show – a good reason to depart from this conclusion.
- Secondly, the role of the Scheme in achieving decarbonisation is made explicit in the LTCP which specifically lists the Scheme as a necessary measure to achieve its ambitious aims. Objectors cannot laud the LTCP without considering it as a whole. Quite simply, building the Scheme now, including the new roads within it, is compatible with attaining net zero.
- Thirdly, the correct basis of assessment is to consider the net GHG emissions against the relevant carbon budgets. This was the approach in the ES, it is an approach which is consistent with national policy, and it is an approach which has been consistently upheld by the Planning Court. On this approach, the GHG effects during the construction of the Scheme are acceptable and, when operational, the Scheme will lead to a reduction in GHG emissions compared to a scenario where it is not delivered. This is a beneficial operational effect which supports the grant of planning permission for the Scheme.

10.44. It follows that the other considerations in this case do not support a departure from the development plan. To the contrary, they support the grant of planning permission for the Scheme. It further follows that the planning balance lies in favour of the grant of planning permission for the Scheme. This is the outcome which is, very clearly, in the best interests of planning and development in Oxfordshire, as well as the fusion sector in the UK.

Conclusion

10.45. For the reasons given above planning permission should be granted for the Scheme without any further delay.

11. The Case for Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Committee (Rule 6 Party)

[This summary of the case for the NPCJC is based on the closing submissions, the proofs of evidence and other submissions to the Inquiry.]

11.1. At the time of the application, several individual Parish Council's objected to the Scheme.[253] The Parish Councils of Appleford, Sutton Courtenay, Culham, Nuneham Courtenay and Burcot & Clifton Hampden subsequently formed the NPCJC and presented their case jointly to the Inquiry.

11.2. The case below is based on the closing submissions of the three objecting Rule 6 parties, and the evidence of individual NPCJC witnesses. The matters raised in Mr Wooley's closing submissions are not repeated in the cases of POETS and East Hendred Parish Council.

Need for the Scheme and Highway Impacts

11.3. The promoters and supporters of the Scheme face a fundamental difficulty. On the one hand they have to meet the requirements of central government for substantial additional housing and employment in the Southern Vale area. On the other they have to reduce carbon emissions as demanded by the recently amended NPPF and the adopted development plans, and in the interests of the planet as a whole. The Scheme attempts this difficult feat by the compromise of road building. This compromise is deeply unsatisfactory.

11.4. First, it does not even try to achieve the ideal, that is, the removal of all congestion.[254] Second, it offers an unnecessarily elaborate solution to a problem which has been exaggerated. There is much material to support that criticism. Traffic congestion is limited to peak periods.[255] Ms Currie's view is that the highway network is not heavily congested.[256]

11.5. That opinion gains further support from the history of the appeal in Sutton Courtney. OCC withdrew its objection on traffic grounds to a proposal to build over one hundred dwellings, following a series of refusals of permission for single dwellings by Inspectors because this would exacerbate the congestion. It must follow that OCC accepted that the problem was less acute than is now claimed. Additionally, the photographs produced show that the network is not overloaded, even at places where the congestion is said to be greatest.[257] Finally, there is the evidence of the gentleman who gave up sending his children to school by

[253] CD E.01, CD E.02, CD E.20, CD E.39,CD E.61, & CD .62

[254] Mr Wisdom proof, p. 14 paras. 11.2-11.4

[255] Ms Casey-Rerhaye in cross-examination Day 5 Wisdom proof pp 87 & 88, figs, 30 & 31.

[256] Ms Currie Oral evidence in chief, Day 6.

[257] Mr Wisdom proof p. 100.

bus and now drives them there instead. He could hardly have done so if traffic conditions were intolerable.

11.6. The Scheme is that it is no more than a temporary expedient. On OCC's own assessment the Scheme results in the network functioning in much the same way as it does now ten years after it opens.[258] Further, OCC appears to have given no thought as to what to do to cater for year eleven and beyond.[259] It cannot be that yet more road building will be seen as the solution to the problems posed by the desire for travel in the relatively near future.

11.7. Induced traffic seems to mean something different to each witness who covered it. Witnesses from Sir Ian Chapman to Mr Disley have agreed that if a new road is built drivers will use it. Drivers are bound to divert onto the Scheme from time to time, and it can be expected to tempt some to abandon the bus for the car. If OCC is right and there is no induced traffic it will take ten years before conditions are the same as today. If the opponents' witnesses turn out to be right, it will take rather less time to reach the same place. Whichever conclusion is right, the relief of whatever congestion there may be will never be more than temporary.

11.8. Paragraph 112 of the draft NPPF now requires that development proposals should promote sustainable transport modes. This should include assessment of the provision for (and greater use) of public transport (bus or rail) and be more than pedestrian & cycle paths beside roads. No evidence has been provided for HIF1 that increased cycle and walking would exceed greater car use.

11.9. The Scheme gives insufficient incentive to drivers to get out of their cars and travel in or on different vehicles. There is no intention to do anything to discourage drivers of private cars from making use of the road. The intention to place no restraints on the use of the road is unsurprising, since the Scheme was conceived in the era of '*predict and provide'*. [260] The likely inference is that the provision for cyclists and walkers was added on at a date later than the adoption of the Scheme. If so, it hardly qualifies as '*decide and provide*'.

11.10. That suspicion is fortified by the evident deficiencies in what is provided for walkers and cyclists. They will have to snake their ways for 11 kilometres close to a carriageway carrying many thousands of vehicles per day. That alone is a formidable deterrent. In addition, it is clear that they will have to negotiate the carriageway at numerous T junctions and

[258] Mr Wisdom proof p. 88, para. 11.2. Currie to the same effect.

[259] Mr Wisdom and Mr Disley in Cross-examination.

[260] Ms Currie in Cross-examination.

roundabouts.[261] It is, therefore, no more than conjecture whether the modal split assumed by and hoped for by the applicant will be achieved in practice.[262] Thus, the benefits to the health of the public for which claims are made, remain wholly speculative. It is no more than a case of wait and see.

11.11. All this will impose heavy burdens on the environment and local people. The evidence shows that the Science Bridge and the second bridge to the west of Appleford will be hugely disruptive to build and in the case of the second of these, environmentally detrimental. This prompted the call for a level crossing of the private sidings there, as did the suggested re-routing of the road further to the west, to take it away from the village. Both adjustments to the Scheme are technically feasible.

11.12. The Scheme is, on any view, ambitious. No doubt, given time and prodigious expenditure of skill and money, it could be delivered. However, the promoters can point to no comparable project which they have undertaken, and the consultant in charge of the works has never overseen the building of a bridge over a four-track electrified railway. This fortifies the fears about the deliverability of the proposal and the value for money which it provides.[263]

11.13. We note that the Minister is seeking to increase the number of affordable homes. The HIF1 road will run counter to that objective as housing developments will require (costly) car ownership as a mode of transport to assess services thereby disadvantaging non-drivers and making it more difficult and expensive for them to realise the dream of home ownership.

11.14. Finally, it is likely that an increase in traffic through Abingdon and Nuneham Courtenay, which has not been assessed, will impact on the people who live there. NPCJC believe that HIF1 will increase traffic through Nuneham Courtenay. It's view is that if the HIF1 is built, all Oxford bound traffic entering and leaving the eastern end of the HIF1 road will pass through the village, generating further noise and air pollution. The junctions and road speeds via A34 (with heavy traffic on the Oxford ring road) and HIF1 are not so materially different as to prevent HGVs from taking the HIF1 route.[264]

11.15. The Scheme provides potential for drivers who would not otherwise choose to go through these places to do so once the Scheme is built.[265] The modelling appears to rest on the assumption that traffic on the road

[261] Mr Blanchard, Mr Chan and Mr Disley in Cross-examination.

[262] Ms Currie in Cross-examination.

[263] See Mr Harman, passim.

[264] Mr Hancock PoE Section 4.1

[265] Ms Baker in cross-examination.

disappears in some unexplained way once it reaches the Golden Balls roundabout and the end of the arm leading to Abingdon.

11.16. The response in OCC's Technical Note of December 2023 states, correctly, that the A415 will be the route through Abingdon with or without the Scheme, and the A4074 through Nuneham Courtenay likewise. In addition, Mr Williams,[266] and Professor Airs contend that there will be substantial amounts of traffic using the A4074 between Golden Balls and Oxford and/ or destinations further north and east.[267] The modelling overlooks the potential for increased volumes of traffic afforded by the construction of the road. This should have been assessed in terms of both the ES and the planning application itself.

11.17. The modelling forms the basis for the suggestion that there will be beneficial consequences such as reductions in noise at the settlements along the route.[268] Yet that can be true only if a substantial percentage of the traffic presently driving through those settlements is through traffic not having a destination there. There is no evidence to show that this is so, and, further, there is good reason to suppose the opposite. This is because there are alternative routes available to a driver with a destination in, say, Sutton Courtenay to go there without taking a tortuous minor road such as Main Road in Appleford. NPCJC also disagree that the HIF1 road as modelled, the basis of claimed noise and air quality benefits will be solely responsible for traffic reduction through Appleford. It anticipates other traffic management measures, including regional interventions to reduce road traffic due to future development.[269]

11.18. All this on its own is enough to justify rejection of the proposal. There then arises the question whether its inclusion in the relevant statutory development plans is enough to save it. Government policy has changed with the amendment to NPPF. That is a material consideration. Second, thinking in Oxfordshire has changed. The evidence shows that the emphasis has changed over the years from the assumption that road building is the answer to all or most traffic problems to one where it is essential to look away from the private car to other means of travel.[270] This too is a material consideration, making it right to have relatively little regard to the development plans.

11.19. The third material circumstance is the general awareness which now prevails, that the problems created by climate change are acute. This too

[266] Proof of evidence, section 3.

[267] Oral evidence Day 12.

[268] Ms Scott proof paragraph 2.39.

[269] Mr Hancock Speaker Notes p3

[270] See Wisdom proof, Section 5 pp.27-34: Tamplin proof Section 4.

is not controversial as between the parties at this Inquiry.[271] The emerging JLP and the SODC and VWHDC Local Plan shows that the District Councils have both declared climate emergencies. Fourth, and also non-controversial, is that there has been a change in the behaviour of the population as a whole. The most striking has been the trend to work from home, accelerated by the Covid pandemic.[272] This has been especially marked in this part of Oxfordshire.[273] In addition, there is the tendency for the young to abandon the car in favour of other forms of travel.[274] There was no challenge to the evidence on this.

11.20. If OCC considered some alternatives to road building before they lit on the Scheme as the solution, there is a suspicion that they were predisposed in favour of the road. This is because '*predict and provide*' was the vogue when the decision in principle was taken, which almost certainly informed the judgment that although the Scheme was one of the two worst environmental options, it was nevertheless preferred.

11.21. The design of the HIF1 scheme was preceded by OAR in two parts (2018 and 2019) and a further updated OAR in 2021. These appraisals fail with DfT WebTAG document '*Transport Analysis Guidance: The Transport Appraisal Process'* January 2014. They also conflict with OCC Local Transport Plan policies, in the LTCP. No equal detailed assessment was undertaken of the ability of non-road packages of measures to meet parts of the transit and connectivity needs of current and future residents of Didcot and surrounding communities. Comparative carbon emission and impact and benefits to local communities of alternative options were not undertaken in the OARs.

11.22. These matters justify a fresh round of optioneering. This will, and should, allow those concerned to reappraise all the alternatives to road building. This is plainly foreshadowed in LTCP and is especially necessary because of the clear opportunities offered by the presence in the area of the Didcot-Oxford railway, due for major improvements at Culham Station and widening to four tracks as far as Radley. It is not for the citizenry to proffer answers to the questions which face the responsible bodies who plan these things.

11.23. The examples of what has been done at Cambridge, Chippenham and in the south of France of which Mr Turnbull and Mr Tamplin spoke show that the kind of exercise which the objectors urge upon the SoS is achievable in practice. The criticism that the French example is not comparable because it concerned an urban area while you are looking at one which is rural is invalid. The Science Vale and in particular that part

[271] Wisdom proof, ,ibid.; Sir I Chapman in cross-examination..

[272] Turnbull proof, para. 41, p.13.

[273] Goodwin proof, p.2

[274] Ibid.

in the VWH is already well on the way to becoming urban and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. As that process unrolls it is accepted that integrated transport plans become progressively easier to draw up and implement.[275] Above all, those concerned need to guard against complacency. It will not be enough to point to success in restraining traffic in Oxford City alone, and to leave it there. That way lies Armageddon.

The Burdens on Local Communities

11.24. In return for the questionable benefits of the HIF1 road, which on any view will be merely transitory, local people and the general public will pay an unacceptable heavy price. A new road carrying many thousands of vehicles, including HGV's, each day must necessarily inflict demonstrable harm on the people living along its route, on the open countryside through which it will pass, and on those objectives which the Oxford Green Belt is designed to protect.

11.25. The SoS should have in mind at the outset that the planning authority with primary responsibility for assessing the Scheme does not support it. This is a material consideration and should be given considerable weight. OCC as planning authority was initially very critical of the project, for reasons which were strikingly similar to those which the objectors have put forward at this Inquiry. When the application was called in OCC reconsidered its position. The most dramatic addition to the proposals was the provision of 50 semi-mature trees along the 11 km length of the road. This appears to have been enough to persuade the planning authority to adopt a neutral position.

11.26. Mr Hancock, on behalf of NPCJC, advised that the relationship between the road and Appleford was not apparent to residents and that they therefore produced a 3D model to inform residents. He submitted images from this model, including the HIF1 embankments and road crossing Appleford Sidings close to dwellings at the southern end of Appleford.[276]

11.27. The three bridges consume the greatest proportion of the resources of the road and have a uniform base structure across the full width of the bridges. This means that they are structured for vehicle loads of dual carriageways for the full width. NPCJC therefore describe the bridge crossing sections of the road as "*ultimately providing a dual carriageway arterial link between the A34 and east Oxford/ M40…".*[277] The ES has not assessed the road as a dual carriageway past Appleford and over the Thames or of significant increase in traffic in future years. This is a major omission.

[275] Mr Disley in cross-examination.
[276] INQ 43
[277] Mr Hancock PoE 4.3.3 and Speaker Notes p 5

Carbon Emissions and Pollution

11.28. Mr Ng, on behalf of NPCJC, detected an increase in car use and carbon emissions since the end of the Covid pandemic lockdown. He predicted that there will not be any reversal of this trend. However, Ms Savage detected a year-on-year decline in measured concentration. The safer assumption is that pollution levels are more likely to increase than reduce as time goes by. The ambition should be to minimise vehicle traffic everywhere.

11.29. This is of particular concern to the parishes of Appleford and Nuneham Courtenay. Appleford is especially vulnerable because the road will be upwind of the village for most of the time when the prevailing winds blow. At Nuneham Courtenay the traffic will travel through the centre of the village.

11.30. Dr. Jones provided evidence on the consequences for the health of the public of the emissions from motor traffic. Ms Savage pointed out that adopted local plan policies advocate production of as few emissions as possible.[278] Building the road would be a clear and obvious breach of those policies. Ms Savage accepts that pollution is a cause for concern over much of Oxfordshire, and that in these circumstances any addition would be better avoided.[279] Even if the traffic modelling is correct, existing conditions are such that even the possibility of more pollution should deter the SoS from running the risk. Traffic will be going uphill as it passes Appleford northbound. This must increase the possibility that the emissions will be correspondingly greater.[280] The riposte from Ms Savage, that there will be a compensating reduction in emissions from southbound traffic on the down gradient is no more than speculative wishful thinking.[281]

11.31. The OCC's climate targets are challenging. Current evidence suggests a significant risk of missing these targets. The LTCP targets reducing current Oxfordshire car trips by a quarter by 2030, a third by 2040, and a net-zero transport network by 2040. The latest LTCP monitoring report sets out the emissions pathway required to reach a net-zero transport network by 2040. The LTCP monitoring report shows that actual emissions increased in 2021 and are around 15% higher than the trajectory set out by the OCC. Similarly, the number of car trips increased by 4.5% from 2019–2022; however, a 25% reduction by 2030 is required.[282]

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[278] Proof paragraph 2.10.

[279] Proof paragraph 3.50; in cross-examination.

[280] Hancock proof paragraph 4.2.13.

[281] Savage proof paragraph 332.

[282] Mr Ng POE paragraph 4

11.32. Mr Ng's evidence suggests Oxfordshire is not on track to achieve its climate targets.

11.33. Policy 27 of the LTCP requires that the OCC assess the impact of HIF1 on Oxfordshire's carbon budgets, taking into account embodied, operational and user emissions. However, the OCC's assessment of HIF1's emissions is not compliant with this policy for two key reasons.[283]

11.34. The approach to quantifying user emissions is flawed. It finds that road user emissions will fall if HIF1 proceeds compared to if it did not. If there is additional road capacity, it is expected that traffic growth, and therefore emissions growth, would be faster than if there were no additional road capacity. OCC has assumed, without justification, that emissions will increase at the same rate regardless of whether HIF1 proceeds. Paragraph 15.5.3 of the ES states that:

> "2034 emissions under the 'Do minimum' scenario have been estimated by assuming that they will increase from 2025 in the same ratio as the 2025 to 2034 increase for the 'Do Something' scenario".

11.35. NPCJC estimates that HIF1's user emissions up to 2050 are around 326ktCO_2. When added to the OCC's estimates of embodied emissions, HIF1's overall emissions are around 481ktCO_2. This significantly exceeds the OCC's estimate of around 124ktCO_2, an underestimate by a factor of 3.9.[284]

11.36. OCC has only compared HIF1's emissions to national carbon budgets. It finds that HIF1 uses up only 0.0077% of the carbon budget from 2023–2027 and reduces emissions in the following years. OCC concludes that the greenhouse gas effects are '*not significant'*. However, comparing the emissions of HIF1, a local infrastructure project, to the national carbon budget is fundamentally flawed. It neglects the impact HIF1 has on Oxfordshire's own carbon reduction targets. The CCC has emphasised that strategic policy and practical action at local levels are critical to achieving the pathway towards net zero.[285]

11.37. OCC has not assessed HIF1's contribution to Oxfordshire's carbon budget. Based on research by the Tyndall Centre at the University of Manchester, Mr Ng compared HIF1's emissions to South Oxfordshire and the Vale's carbon budgets. This shows that HIF1 would consume around 20% of the carbon budget. This is equivalent to the annual car emissions of around 350,000 South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse residents.[286]

11.38. Research by Transport for Quality of Life (TfQL), a transport policy consultancy, each £m of expenditure (in 2020 prices) was associated with 613tCO2 in a scheme's opening year, based on an analysis of 63

[283] Mr NG POE paragraph 8
[284] Mr Ng POE paragraph 10
[285] Mr Ng POE paragraph 12
[286] Mr Ng POE paragraph 11

post-opening project evaluation Reports. Applying these figures to HIF1 this gives an estimated 145ktCO2 of emissions in the opening year (assumed to be 2026). TfQL's approach assumes induced traffic increases at around a rate of 2% of opening traffic per year, starting the year after the scheme is completed, rising to 24% 12 years after scheme completion. On this basis, Mr Ng estimates that road user emissions arising from HIF1 to be 326ktCO2 in total by 2050. When road user emissions are added to embodied emissions the overall estimate is 481ktCO2.

11.39. HIF1 is unlikely to encourage modal shift away from car travel towards active travel and buses. According to the Oxford Transport Strategy (2016) Oxford's population grew by 16,000 between 2001 and 2011. Yet, traffic flows on key roads actually dropped over the same period.[287] OCC explains that this was achieved through a combination of measures, including not only public transport, walking and cycling improvements, but also city-centre traffic restrictions including bus gates, high public parking charges, and planning policies that restrict parking supply. A similar package of measures is not being proposed in the context of the HIF1 scheme.

11.40. By increasing road capacity for car travel, it will increase car traffic, even if it also increases bus journeys and active travel at the same time. It risks failing to engender the modal shift that OCC seeks. OCC has not provided modelling evidence to support its assertions of modal shift. In fact, its own modelling results, as set out in Ms. Currie's POE, shows that bus travel remains essentially the same, and even declines slightly, once the road is constructed.[288]

11.41. It is unlikely that HIF1's emissions could be absorbed by identifying emissions reductions in other areas, given that the transport sector is not currently aligned with the net zero trajectory. Mr Ng's analysis suggests HIF1's emissions would significantly exceed the potential carbon savings from Oxfordshire achieving its cycling targets by around 60%.[289]

11.42. The CCC is clear: 'constraining the growth in vehicle mileage is vital to reducing emissions' and that road-building projects should be reviewed to ensure that they 'do not lock in unsustainable levels of traffic growth' and 'permit schemes only if they can meaningfully support cost-effective delivery of Net Zero'. Mr Ng contends that HIF1 does not meet these criteria.

Air Quality

11.43. The ES does not demonstrate that the road has been aligned to minimise impact on air quality at neighbouring communities.[290] It contains

[287] Mr Ng Summary paragraph 17
[288] Mr Ng Summary paragraph 20
[289] Mr Ng Summary paragraph 20
[290] ES Chapter 6 Air Quality

inaccuracies and limitations that renders it unreliable. It fails to address concerns regarding levels of emissions of NO_2,PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ as identified by the World Health Organisation in 2021 and as identified and advised by the UK Health Security Agency.

11.44. There have been no adequate measurements of the current levels of NO_2, PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ at property boundaries for critical areas in Appleford. The single measurement taken fails to capture the emissions from industrial activities at Appleford Sidings.[291] The air quality dispersion computer model is not calibrated to real data and is therefore unreliable. Due to the proximity of the proposed HIF1 road to Appleford, the assessment of air quality does not follow the PPG or the NPPF.[292] Current air quality at Main Road Appleford show levels of $PM_{2.5}$, PM_{10}, NO_2 in excess of WHO guidelines.[293] The model also fails to take account of the increase in emissions due to changes of gear and engine speed, particularly for loaded HGVs accelerating up the Appleford Sidings Bridge.

11.45. The modelled pollutant concentrations at public exposure receptors along Main Road in Appleford, (locations R107, R26, R90, R69, R24, R100, R66, R74), are not based on credible traffic flows.[294] The only location of monitored real data, (location R107, matched to location RIV3), shows modelled values from the road well below the present measured value. The contribution from HIF1 and also local road traffic on top of other sources of pollution is not explored or explained.[295]

11.46. The exclusion of Nuneham Courtenay from the air quality assessment, when there is a likelihood of increased traffic due to HIF1, has denied the opportunity to assess the impact. Therefore we consider that the ES does not demonstrate that it meets the adopted policies of SODC, EP1 Air Quality; DES6iv residential amenity &, emissions; ENV12 pollution & emissions in respect of Nuneham Courtenay.[296]

11.47. The failure to include induced traffic on the proposed HIF1 road in the traffic modelling and over-reliance on expected reduction in village traffic has skewed the air quality assessment, unbalancing the assessment of harms against benefits.[297]

Green Belt

11.48. As Mr James[298] and the District Council officer recognise,[299] the road would conflict with more than one of the recognised functions of the

[291] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 4.2.6
[292] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 4.2.3
[293] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 4.2.2
[294] Table 2 of ES vol III Appendix 6.2
[295] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 4.2.9
[296] Mr Hancock Speaker Notes p.7
[297] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 4.2.16.3

[298] Mr James Green Belt POE paragraph 6.
[299] Ms Bowerman POE paragraph 4.51.

Green Belt in South Oxfordshire. This must automatically make it inappropriate. The SoS is invited to reject the artificial and largely semantic arguments which are said to point to the opposite conclusion. For instance, the argument that the road will be only a small encroachment on the Green Belt is demonstrably absurd.[300]

11.49. Similarly, the contention that it must be appropriate because it will be a local rather than a strategic road is no more than a verbal quibble. It is equally capable to being seen as a strategic as it is a local road, just as the two motorway service appeals cases cited by Mr Greep were held in one instance to be a strategic proposal and in the other a local one.[301] The argument that very special circumstances justify the HIF1 depends on the largely circular argument that the road is needed because of its function in releasing the sites needed for housing and employment.[302] That might be so if, and only if, there were thought to be no alternative to HIF1 as a way of releasing those sites. However, there are a variety of alternatives which might offer a solution to the problem.[303]

11.50. The SoS can be satisfied that it would be right to carry out a more rigorous examination of the alternatives than was done in the OCC '*optioneering*' exercise then that too would remove the very special circumstances said to exist here. Mr Greep appeared to agree with both these propositions.[304]

11.51. HIF1 constitutes inappropriate development in the Oxford Green Belt in the section north of the Thames. OCC Planning Officers agree. Ms Ash's PoE tends significantly towards HIF1 being inappropriate development in the Green Belt for which very special circumstances exist, rather than that HIF1 does not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.[305]

11.52. Mr Greep's view that NPPF paragraph 155 c) means that it must be possible for some development to come forward within the Green Belt which, by extension, means that a degree of impact on openness can be tolerated. However, paragraph 155 c) requires openness to be preserved. The mere existence of the policy cannot be construed as acceptance of impact on openness, rather that a judgement is possible can be made that development does not have a deleterious impact on openness.[306]

11.53. There can be no doubt that HIF1 causes harm to the Green Belt in the area in which it is located and is part of the cumulative erosion of the Green Belt across a wider area.[307] It is unacceptable to attempt to

[300] Mr Greep POE paragraph 4.2.4 *et seq.*
[301] Mr James Green Belt POE paragraphs 4.3.11 and 4.3.12.
[302] Statement of Case paragraph 2.2.8: Mr Greep POE paragraph 5.2.14.
[303] For example, Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 5.6 *et seq.*
[304] Mr Greep in cross-examination.
[305] Mr James Green Belt rebuttal paragraph 2
[306] Mr James Green Belt rebuttal paragraph 7
[307] Ms Ash POE paragraph 5.36 and table 5.1 & 5.2

trivialise the impact by saying that HIF1 only takes up a miniscule percentage of Oxford Green Belt land.

11.54. NPPF 155 does not imply that there is an acceptable level of harm to openness. There may be types of local transport infrastructure that do not harm openness, for example cycleways built at ground level, minor improvements to existing roads, bus stops. The roundabout at the CSC entrance might not harm openness if carefully designed, as it is merely reconfiguring an existing layout and there would be no change in overall character. However, a major new road on a large embankment across the Thames floodplain, a very large bridge over the Thames, and intrusion into the rural enclave alongside Clifton Hampden, would harm the openness of the Green Belt.[308]

11.55. NPCJC contend that it is erroneous to claim that safeguarding a route means that it has already been accepted that the Scheme can come forward using the route safeguarded within the adopted development plan without causing unacceptable harm to the Green Belt. The purpose of safeguarding is only to prevent further development within the safeguarded corridor until such time as the remaining stages of the development process have been concluded.[309]

11.56. Both sections of OCC claim that there are very special circumstances that outweigh inappropriate development in the Green Belt, based partly on an incorrect assessment that the road network cannot cope without HIF1 even in the short term, and on unreliable forecasts of traffic flows in the medium term.[310]

11.57. It is therefore necessary to consider the degree of harm to the Green Belt, since the reference point for very special circumstances is whether harm is outweighed by other considerations There is no attempt to assess the degree of benefit against the degree of harm. Whilst the draft NPPF allows for a more flexible approach to the Green Belt, the WMS states that whenever greenbelt is released it must benefit both communities and nature.

Landscape

11.58. There is relatively little difference between the parties on this matter. The critical comments in Mr James' proof on Landscape are echoed, if somewhat more faintly, by the District Council witnesses.[311] Even Ms Ash for OCC expresses much the same reservations about the impact on the landscape.[312] This is unsurprising, since the Scheme introduces large urban features into a landscape which, apart from the town of Didcot itself, is mostly open countryside. In addition to the carriageways and

[308] Mr James Green Belt rebuttal paragraph 13
[309] Mr James Green Belt rebuttal paragraph 16
[310] Mr James Green Belt POE paragraph 36

[311] Mr Butler POE paragraphs 4.14 and 4.15 and Ms Bowerman POE paragraphs 4.29 & 4.31.

[312] Ms Ash POE paragraph 6.21

cycle and footpaths themselves, there will be the large visually intrusive and functional viaduct and bridge structures slicing across the landscape which all the witnesses agree can only be injurious.

11.59. The elevated road and embankments at 11.3m high will be a major visual intrusion to adjacent dwellings in southern Appleford. The small woodland currently providing a screen to industrial activity will be lost.[313]

11.60. HIF1 has a large adverse impact on the landscape setting between Didcot, Culham, and Clifton Hampden and on sensitive and important landscape settings including that of a National Trail. The significance of landscape effects has been underplayed by the applicant and the LPA has failed to take adequate account of the actual significance of effects. The applicant has suggested that these effects are minimal at the scale of local Landscape Character Areas, by which argument all development has at most a minor adverse landscape impact if the scale of comparison is big enough.[314]

11.61. The applicant contends that all roads have large adverse landscape impacts., The correct assessment should be that large and significant landscape impacts create a very high bar against which scheme benefits should be measured.

11.62. The offer by the Applicant to beef up planting by specifying 'up to' 50 semi-mature trees does not adequately address criticisms of the Scheme planting design by landscape officers of the District Councils. It is to their discredit that they appear to be satisfied with such a minimal enhancement.[315]

11.63. The most important impacts are at:

- The Thames bridge which significantly impacts on the nationally significant Thames Path National Trail but which is treated as much the same as any other impact;
- The countryside setting of the Clifton Hampden bypass, where the road intrudes into a peaceful enclave of fields, mature hedgerows and trees, woodland, on the edge of the village and criss-crossed with footpaths enabling public access;
- The viaduct across the gravel lakes to the South of the Thames (not even addressed in earlier assessments, as it was apparently not realised that the lakes were there), where a tranquil water body of increasing biodiversity and potential recreational value will have its character shattered by a squat brutalist concrete viaduct; and
- The Appleford sidings, where the importance of the visual impact on residents is significantly underplayed.

[313] Mr Hancock Speaker Notes p.2
[314] Mr James Landscape Summary POE paragraph 3
[315] Mr James Landscape POE paragraph 32

WebTAG landscape appraisal

11.64. The assessment uses both LVIA and WebTAG guidance, but does not follow WebTAG guidance adequately. LVIA, WebTAG, and LA 107 (DMRB) all operate on the same principle. They all seek to identify the inherent sensitivity of landscape types or views, set against the magnitude of impact of the proposed development, to arrive at an overall assessment of landscape effects from large adverse through neutral to large beneficial. Where WebTAG differs to some extent from LVIA is in the meaning attached to any given assessment.[316]

11.65. The WebTAG appraisal (Appendix 3.1) assigns a '*moderate adverse*' impact on HIF1 for the section between Didcot/ Culham/ Clifton Hampden. However, this simply refers to the category between '*large*' and '*slight*' adverse impact. Table 3 of TAG Unit A3 defines moderate adverse as a scheme that is:

- Out of scale with the landscape, or at odds with the local pattern and landform;
- Visually intrusive and will adversely impact on the landscape;
- Not possible to fully integrate, that is, environmental design measures will not prevent the Scheme from scarring the landscape in the longer term as some features of interest will be partly destroyed or their setting reduced or removed;
- Will have an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important characteristics or elements; and
- In conflict with local and national policies to protect open land and nationally recognised countryside.[317]

11.66. The LVIA concludes that no significant landscape effects are predicted on published landscape character areas, however the TAG 'moderate' impact makes it very unlikely that the effects would not be significant on landscapes of high sensitivity and/or importance.

11.67. A very important principle of WebTAG is the 'most adverse category' rule:

> "a scheme as a whole should be assessed according to the most adverse assessment of the key environmental resources affected. …. The rationale for this approach is that highly adverse impacts should not be diluted or masked by less adverse impacts."

HIF1 has several '*large adverse*' assessments, for example at the Thames river crossing, the impact on the nationally significant Thames

[316] Mr James Landscape POE paragraph 11
[317] Mr James Landscape POE paragraph 12

Path (National Trail), and the Clifton Hampden bypass. The overall assessment should therefore be large adverse.[318]

Trees

11.68. The applicant has committed to plant up to 50 semi-mature trees. However, in a setting where mature trees have been removed but a comparison with those that remain is still possible, a semi-mature planted tree has a negligible visual presence. It will establish itself very slowly compared with trees planted at a smaller size. Semi-mature trees are better suited to locations where they can have a genuine visual impact. They are also reliant on high standards of long-term maintenance which cannot be guaranteed, especially in these times of more frequent extreme weather events due to climate change.[319]

Bridge Farm Gravel Workings

11.69. Bridge Farm gravel workings were subject to a Planning Condition for the site to be restored for nature conservation and leisure purposes, the latter requiring a s106 agreement to ensure public access to the restored site for a minimum of 20 years.

11.70. HIF1 has a large adverse landscape impact on the recovering landscape of the mineral workings, the programme of landscape and biodiversity restoration, and on public access, which were essential to the acceptability of the development.

11.71. The AECOM document gives the impression that the s73 application will be a routine matter once permission for HIF1 has been granted. However, s73 applications are regarded as new applications under the terms of the 2017 EIA Regulations and require a new screening exercise if falling under Schedule 2, or a mandatory new EIA if under Schedule 1.[320]

11.72. OCC may seek to argue that the EIA carried out for HIF1 provides adequate updated information. NPCJC say this is not acceptable for three reasons:

- The landscape EIA was deeply flawed, as it failed to recognise the distinctive landscape character of the recovering gravel lakes in the otherwise low grade landscape of LLCA 9.
- Although a biodiversity assessment was made and reported in ES chapter 9 this was done four years ago at a time when restoration was [321]only just under way. A considerable increase in species diversity is to be expected as the transition for raw mineral workings to mature aquatic landscape progresses.

[318] Mr James Landscape POE paragraph 16
[319] Mr James Landscape POE paragraph 20
[320] INQ 50 Mr James Supplementary POE paragraph 6
[321] INQ 50 Mr James Supplementary POE paragraph 7

- The AECOM landscape EIA was conducted without there being public access to the site area, whereas the restoration requires guaranteed public access, so a greater degree of visual impact assessment is necessary.

Noise

11.73. The Scheme is not compliant with NPPF (paragraphs 105 and 185), the SOLP (STRAT 4, Policies EP1, ENV120) or the VWH LPP1 and LPP2 (Policies DP 23 & 26, 33(vi), 34, 43). It also fails to meet the aims of NPSE and PPG. PPG states that:

> "In cases where existing noise sensitive locations already experience high noise levels, a development that is expected to cause even a small increase in the overall noise level may result in a significant adverse effect occurring even though little to no change in behaviour would be likely to occur"[322]

11.74. Mr Butler fairly conceded that noise and motion go into the harmful scale of the planning balance. In addition to the impact during construction must be added the undoubted harmful impact of the noise, vibration and movement of the traffic once the road is open, which will of course be permanent. The limitations on the reliability of the noise estimates is covered our comments in respect of traffic modelling.[323]

11.75. The baseline noise measurements failed to represent the qualities of the noise environment, rendering the noise computer model, unreliable. The applicant failed to undertake subsequent appropriate monitoring during the consultation and scheme development stages.[324]

11.76. NPCJC disagree with the modelling conclusions on two counts:

- It disagrees that the traffic on the HIF1 road is largely the reassigned traffic from Appleford Main Road and expect that additional traffic will be attracted and pass close to Appleford. In this context it refers to a press release from the Road Haulage Association that suggests that HIF1 could alleviate congestion on the A34.[325]

- It also disagrees that HIF1 will be solely responsible for traffic reduction through Appleford. It suggests that there are likely to be a range of other interventions that would also reduce road traffic and these have not been modelled.[326]

11.77. Appleford residents already shoulder a significant burden of nuisance related to nearby essential infrastructure, specifically the rail corridor from Didcot to Oxford and beyond, the waste management activities of

[322] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 1.4.
[323] NPCJC Closing submissions paragraph 26
[324] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 1.4.1 (p.4)
[325] INQ 57
[326] Mr Hancock Speaker notes page 2

FCC including landfill and materials sorting and composting, and the quarrying activities of Hanson. The households at the south end of the village have been designated a DEFRA Noise Action Plan Important Area.[327]

11.78. The positioning of the proposed road and flyover will impact unduly on residents of Appleford. Furthermore, the construction of the flyover risks exacerbating existing sources of noise pollution within Appleford by reflecting and enhancing noise from the quarrying and stone-moving activities at Appleford Sidings. Government guidance requires that anticipated as well as current noise sources should be considered. The applicant has not addressed the issue of cumulative impact.[328]

11.79. The road will add significant traffic noise with the gradients of the elevated road generating noise from speed and gear change. In addition, the design and position of the bridge could focus and reflect rail and shunting noise towards the overlooking dwellings. Vibration within the bridge structure could be a noise source. The elevation and proximity of the road to dwellings prevents adequate noise suppression by landscaping and distance.[329]

11.80. At present, no HGVs transit the village due to the weight restriction on the listed railway bridge at Appleford. HIF1 has the potential to attract significant numbers of HGVs. Dr Jones drew attention to a press release by the Road Haulage Association suggesting that it could alleviate congestion on the A34 and could therefore have implications for the number of HGVs using the Appleford Sidings bridge.

11.81. Nuneham Courtenay village lies astride the A4074 between Oxford and Wallingford and is also a NIA. The HIF1 scheme's eastern termination discharges all traffic onto the A4074. Most of the traffic will pass through the centre of Nuneham Courtenay. The impact of this traffic on the community has been excluded from assessment in the ES notwithstanding that this traffic is forecast to experience an 87% increase in daily traffic by 2034.[330]

Health Impacts

11.82. The main adverse health effects of roads are due to air pollution and noise. The health effects known to be caused by such air pollution include: cardiovascular mortality; respiratory mortality; heart attacks and angina; raised blood pressure and diabetes.[331]

11.83. As exhaust emissions decrease with improvements in vehicle propulsion technology such as electric vehicles, the importance of non-exhaust emissions from road wear, resuspension of road dust, tyre wear and

[327] Dr Jones Speaker Notes p1
[328] Dr Jones Speaker Notes p4
[329] Mr Hancock Speaker Notes p2
[330] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 1.4.1
[331] Dr Jones POE paragraph 7

brake wear will become increasingly important. Toxicological research is able to attribute some of the adverse health effects of roads to these factors. Therefore, we cannot rely on electrification of vehicles to solve the health problems caused by the road.[332]

11.84. Traffic noise is considered as a physiological stressor, second only to air pollution and on a par with radon or secondary tobacco smoking. The main resultant harms are seen in terms of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease increasing the risk of heart attacks and stroke and arise due to damage to the lining of the blood vessels due to stress related hormones released due to noise exposure.[333]

11.85. The applicant has not submitted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as required by the Public Health England. The applicant asserts that sufficient attention to health has been given in the ES. However, a number of matters that should ordinarily be included in a HIA have not been addressed. Moreover, even where some of these areas have been addressed many of the assertions are not correct.

11.86. Examples of this include the provision of a bus stop on the HIF1 road to which people of Appleford can walk via an improved walking route is asserted to be a health benefit. However, for the majority of Appleford residents, especially the older residents, this would be an unrealistic distance to walk to a bus especially with shopping etc. It is further asserted that there is currently no safe walking route from Appleford to Sutton Courtenay. This is incorrect – there is in fact already an off-road footpath, used by residents to access the Millenium Common and beyond. The provision of a cycleway beside the proposed road is hailed as a significant improvement in infrastructure for active transport. However, there is no evidence given that the route would be beneficial in terms of driving modal change from cars to bicycles and would merely expose those who use it to high levels of pollutants due to the HGV traffic.[334]

11.87. The road divides the linked communities of Sutton Courtenay and Appleford. The position of the HIF1 road will permanently disrupt typical journeys:

- From Abingdon and Sutton Courtenay direction to access Appleford Recreation ground, playground, football field, allotments and village hall.
- Access between Appleford and the community assets in Sutton Courtenay, such as the church, school, shops, nursery, petrol station, pubs and village hall.
- Access between Appleford and the facilities of the market town of Abingdon.

[332] Dr Jones POE paragraph 10
[333] Dr Jones POE paragraph 12
[334] Dr Jones Speaker Notes p5

- Access from Appleford to the Millenium Common, a jointly administered community asset shared between Appleford/Sutton Courtenay.
- Access between Appleford and Sutton Courtenay via Appleford Level Crossing and the PRoW/BOAT following the Portway/Old Wantage Way path.[335]

11.88. Even if an HIA had been carried out, it would probably have been inaccurate, given that the traffic predictions for the proposed road are flawed, in the opinion of residents who understand the traffic issues better than most.[336]

Heritage

11.89. Nuneham Courtenay is both a conservation area and a community of listed buildings. The applicant has indicated increases in 2034 in traffic at the eastern end of the HIF1 road as 56% in 2024 and 116 % in 2034. Any increase in the traffic through Nuneham Courtenay village will necessarily causes significant harm to both the setting of its listed cottages, and the character and appearance of the conservation area. NPCJC maintain that the applicant is obliged to assess the significant environmental effects on both the village and park and the buildings and other land forming part of its setting.[337]

Road alignment at Appleford

11.90. If a new road is deemed necessary, the potential damage to Appleford, could be mitigated to a degree by increasing the distance between the road and the Appleford dwellings. NPCJC have demonstrated a number of alternative positions for the approach road and bridge over the Appleford sidings.[338] This is a viable location and would require a less complex bridge.

11.91. The failure to consider the possibility of traffic increase through Nuneham Courtenay is not consistent with WebTag M4 and is evidence that the decide and provide approach involving uncertainty has not been adopted.[339] The Bridge over Appleford Sidings is an example of predict and provide. Whilst there is uncertainty on the future of the land north of Didcot Power Station, if Heidleberg Cement, the owners of the Appleford sidings, follow FCC lead, the bridge could be a future stranded asset if the sidings are developed and would unnecessarily perpetuate the damage on southern Appleford.[340]

[335] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 1.4.3
[336] Dr Jones Speaker Notes p6
[337] Mr Hancock POE paragraph 4.1.3
[338] INQ 43 Mr Hancock Supplemental proof sect 3
[339] Mr Hancock Speaker Notes p.8
[340] Mr Hancock Speaker Notes p.9

Infrastructure for new housing

11.92. Housing sites in the SOLP were justified in a large part by their sustainable locations: for Culham (STRAT 9) -next to a mainline railway station and easy road access to Abingdon; for Didcot sites - next to a town with multiple facilities and a major mainline railway station and Milton Park industrial estate; for Berinsfield - alongside main A4074 Oxford to Reading Road.[341]

11.93. New cycle routes have been long planned and required to support growth in this area of employment; new bus routes have been repeatedly requested by local Parish Councils and people to ease morning and evening commuter congestion and relieve school time congestion. The issue that has contributed to the peak time congestion around the two strategic sites is that the cycle network has not been delivered. This has been extremely frustrating and could contribute to a reduction in traffic coming from that direction at peak times.[342]

11.94. A safe cycle connection west from the Campus and strategic residential site into Abingdon is also part of this cycle network plan. It is part of the Infrastructure Development Plan in SOLP, but it has been needed and called for at least the last 12 years. It would deliver infrastructure that could relieve a lot of the problematic peak time congestion into Abingdon.

11.95. Currently, about half of regular employees at UKAEA come from Abingdon and Didcot. Most of these should have no need to use a car to commute to work if the cycling improvements were implemented. There is a nursery on site, so the type of journeys to work that include a separate nursery drop are not needed.

11.96. In 2016, there were 1850 people working at the CSC, and that has more than doubled to around 4000. The Europa School, has grown in numbers too, from around 800 to well over 1000 over the same period. Traffic congestion at peak times has not increased proportionately. Train frequency has increased over the last 6 years, as well as school bus services and public bus availability. Other changes like home/office hybrid working are evidence that growth is not constrained by a simple lack of road connectivity.[343]

11.97. Land safeguarded by the SOLP has not been used. The current route comes much closer to housing in Appleford and school and housing in Culham. This means that claims that the HIF1 scheme will reduce traffic going through villages is not accurate. It will make no difference to Appleford, or for any new developments to the west of Sutton Courtenay.[344]

[341] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 1
[342] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 2
[343] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 3
[344] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 4

11.98. When flooding closes the road to Clifton Hampden, southbound traffic from Long Wittenham goes through Appleford to cross the Thames. Addressing these issues could make the need for the HIF1 scheme unnecessary.[345]

11.99. Appleford village does not have a primary school and a large number of children attend Sutton Courtenay school. Most children are driven there because there is no safe alternative and there are no plans for any. If the Scheme was built as proposed, any children from Appleford wanting to cycle to the Europa school would need to access the new cycle lane at the T junction with the B4016 Appleford. They would need to turn right and so cross a main road. But more importantly, they would need to cycle along the existing parts of Appleford that are currently unsuitable, such as over the railway bridge there, there are no improvements to these parts of the network in this plan, so any likelihood of Appleford (and also Sutton Courtenay) residents benefitting from modal shift as a result of the provision on the HIF scheme is slight. Villages will have the same poor provision of cycling/crossings etc as they do now on the routes that go to meet the HIF.[346]

11.100. The inclusion of a roundabout between the B4106 and the proposed HIF1 road constructed between Appleford and Sutton Courtenay would increase the rush hour density on the B4016 passing through Sutton Courtenay. It would be used to get to the A415 by traffic approaching from the west and will be a shorter route for drivers. This point is underpinned by the inadequate modelling of East-West traffic through Sutton Courtenay and the failure to allow for induced traffic and for all the other reasons set out on pages 19-20 under "Sutton Courtenay" in the Joint Parishes Statement of Case.[347]

Existing congestion issues

11.101. Congestion is generally at peak times only. For the majority of the day and at weekends the A415 and over the bridges at Culham and Clifton Hampden traffic flows well and have little congestion at all.[348]

11.102. Public transport for and around Science Vale has been inconsistent over the past decade. Therefore, many commuters have not been able to rely on a consistent service and have relied on their cars. Relieving congestion at peak times is one of the most straightforward of projects, especially where there are a few clear destinations for that peak traffic, such as Harwell, Milton Park, Culham campus, and the Europa school.[349]

11.103. Everyone in this area knows when the A34 has been closed, often because of a crash, without checking the traffic news. It is obvious from the heavy and sudden build-up of traffic on all the roads around here.

[345] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 6.4
[346] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 7
[347] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 8
[348] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 9
[349] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 12

The safety problems on the A34 are not addressed, it will still bring traffic to the new roads when it is closed. With the proposed growth planned, this will lead to the same problems the Bus Club faces.

11.104. The two local bridge routes have been closed with increasing frequency as a result of flooding. The flooding is a result of climate change impacts – the warmest and wettest winter for decades. We live right by one of the largest rivers in England. Flood defences are essential and work on these has not kept up with the need. When the roads leading up to both the bridges flood, they also often flood homes.

11.105. With growth planned in the District, the risk is bus delays will increase with congestion unless modal shift to active and public transport is prioritised. When roads induce more traffic leading to further congestion, bus services are withdrawn. It is a vicious circle.

11.106. Commuter growth in this area can be served by employer travel plans, better active travel infrastructure both public and employer provided, and reliable public transport services and better maintenance of these. New working patterns include working from home for part of the working week and fewer commuter movements at peak hours. UKAEA has stated in 2022 that only around 50% of its workforce was on site on any one day.[350]

11.107. One of the key risks to the planned growth in this area is the congestion on the A415 towards Abingdon in the evening peak period during term time. This is not addressed by this scheme and actually risks worsening that congestion. The fact that Abingdon traffic has not been modelled means the Scheme is highly risky in terms of providing what it sets out to provide which is unlocking growth in the area.[351]

11.108. Induced traffic risks include Large Goods Vehicles from existing industrial sites. Routing agreements will be scrapped and HGV from sites close to Appleford will use the road. HGV and LGV traffic will use the elevated section overlooking Appleford. Much of this is currently routed at ground level and hidden from the village. Lorries will be accelerating up a slope and then down again, and the prevailing wind direction means the noise and the pollutants will be much worse for the residents there and their health and amenity.[352]

11.109. There are, without doubt, congestion issues in and around this area at peak times. However, travel alternatives plus the design of new site allocations which align with LTCP 5 policies, and climate/carbon/nature goals are all missing. The risk of bringing more LGVs and induced traffic to the Golden Balls is that further traffic flows northwards on the A4074 through Nuneham Courtenay, a conservation village with houses built without foundations.[353]

[350] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 16
[351] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 17
[352] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraphs 18-22
[353] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes paragraph 25

11.110. The Scheme does not provide enough suitable opportunities for modal shift and traffic reduction proposals. The Traffic Regulation Orders are only to be provided after the Scheme has been given planning permission. This makes it impossible to assess the true impact of the Scheme on all the key receptors.[354]

Financial viability

11.111. NPCJC consider that HIF1 is unlikely to be financially viable within the current funding envelope. The budget allocated £27m for inflation, whereas Mr Ng suggests an inflation allowance of £62m is required.

11.112. NPCJC contend that there is also insufficient allowance for risk and that there is only a 62% probability that HIF1 can be completed in the given budget. Mr Ng estimates the overall cost of HIF1 to be £366m, which significantly exceeds the current available funding of £296m.

11.113. Mr Harman, on behalf of NPCJC identified three main risks to the viability of HIF1. These are design surety, programme surety and cost surety. There are outstanding objections from statutory undertakers, established businesses, and landowners. These may require adjustments to the Scheme and perhaps supplementary planning applications.

11.114. The Science Bridge/Network Rail Interface will be the biggest construction risk and Mr Harman believes these will have a major impact on the HIF1 Project Schedule. During the Science Bridge construction, lane and road closures of both the A4130 and Milton Road will be potentially required to accommodate piling and lifting operations.

11.115. NPCJC consider that it is therefore questionable whether the HIF Project is commercially viable given that the final outturn cost could be somewhere between £400m & £500m. If approved, it would be a major piece of infrastructure which will have a design life of around 100 years if not more. Given that Appleford Sidings will be in existence only for the short term 10 -15 years, it seems excessive to build a Bridge, that potentially will become redundant by 2035. The Appleford Sidings Bridge will then become an unnecessary costly blot on the landscape, which will require OCC to maintain until 2128 if not longer. This would seem to be a total waste of public money.

11.116. Heavy Construction Traffic and the impact it will have for various construction scenarios. For example, there will be more than 5,400 lorry deliveries alone just to provide the material to elevate the road above the Network Overhead Line Cabling height. The general public will be subjected to 4 years (2025 to 2029) of road and lane closures and traffic disruption throughout the Didcot wider area.

[354] Ms Casey Rerhaye Speaker Notes Paragraph 28

Summary and Conclusion

11.117. At the beginning of the Inquiry, the Inspector was asked to conclude that there are 11 reasons why planning permission for HIF1 should be refused. The Inspector is invited to come to the view that all have been made out to her satisfaction, that planning permission should be refused, and that the people of the Science Vale should be reprieved.

12. The Case for POETS (Rule 6 Party)

[This summary of the case for POETS is based on the closing submissions, the proofs of evidence and other submissions to the Inquiry.]

Adequacy of the Environmental Statement

12.1. POETS view is that the ES is fatally flawed to the extent that it fails to satisfy the requirements of the EIA Regulations and should be considered as "*Wednesbury unreasonable*" and of no validity. They contend that if this position is accepted, Regulation 3 prohibits the granting of planning permission for the application.

12.2. They contend that firstly the ES fails to deal with the significant environmental effects of the application on a range of issues arising from its failure to assess the significant environmental effects of HIF1 beyond the Study area, including the Town Centre of Abingdon, the area to the eastern end of the Scheme and the area to the west of the Milton Interchange along the A417 towards Wantage.[355]

12.3. The ES must assess, not only the effects of the Scheme to construct the HIF1 but also the effects of its use. POETS consider the judgements in *Holohan and others and An Bord Pleanala [2018], Case C -461/17 (*paras 10 – 16 and 56 – 69) and rulings 4 and 5, *(Holohan*) to be relevant. [356] POETS state that these judgements require the assessment of the effects of an EIA development project, is obliged to supply information that expressly addresses the significant effects of a project. They contend that in the case of this application that includes the effects on Abingdon, and the effects of its use.[357]

12.4. Secondly, they consider that the ES fails to consider reasonable, realistic, alternative options, as required by the EIA Regulations 2017 and supported by Ruling 5 of *Holohan*. Judgments of UK Courts and the European Court of Justice demonstrate that not only are such assessments required in an ES, but that failure to do so renders its accompanying application open to challenge if permission for that application were to be granted.

12.5. POETS request a Direction under Regulation 25 of the 2017 EIA Regulations, requiring additional information on these two points in order to enable for there to be a complete and valid ES.[358]

Failings of the Didcot Road Proposals

12.6. The Scheme is not part of an integrated transport strategy that incorporates effective mode shift measures. Consequently, the proposals conflict with national and local car travel reduction policies.

[355] POETS provide further detail on this matter in a letter dated 4 November 2023 - Mr Tamplin POE p1 and Appendix A2
[356] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 3.2
[357] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 3.2
[358] CD L.7 p1 & Mr Tamplin's POE paragraph 3.6

12.7. The claim that it is a balanced strategy is unsubstantiated. The only measures proposed as part of the Scheme to assist other modes of travel are some roadside cycle/footways plus some new bus stops. Experience from Oxford and elsewhere shows that achieving a mode shift requires "*sticks*" as well as "*carrots*". Such measures are missing from the proposals and the associated Didcot Garden Town and Walking/Cycling Plan.[359]

12.8. The effectiveness of any future traffic restraint measures would be undermined by the massive increase in the capacity of the new roads. It doesn't make sense to build new roads at great expense and environmental damage only to reduce the need for such roads later.

12.9. The proposed construction of HIF1 fails to follow Policy 36 of the recently adopted LTCP which requires the Highway Authority, as Applicant in this case, to adopt road capacity schemes only when all other options have been considered. No evidence of that test being applied to HIF1 has been provided in this application.[360]

Planning Policy and Climate Change

12.10. The current planning system is an obstacle, not an opportunity, to achieving sustainable development goals and combat climate change effectively. A new, radical approach to the production of plans and the assessment of proposals is required. This conclusion is reinforced by the 2007-8 financial crash, Brexit and the pandemic.[361]

12.11. The UK planning system has been too slow in its response to the increasingly urgent need to develop and implement such measures, though there are some signs locally that this historic but presently ineffective system may be moving towards the necessary changes.[362]

12.12. A radical approach to transport planning in southern Oxfordshire is urgently needed to address the challenge of climate change. Permission for HIF1 does not simply mean that this particular road will be built, but that the very large sum of public money funding this scheme will be diverted from the provision of sustainable transport.[363]

12.13. The Government in the past has had a seriously detrimental effect on the planning process locally, with the imposition of housing targets on locally determined and assessed housebuilding needs. In 2019/2020 the SoS for Housing, Communities and Local Government made two Directions under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The first required SODC to abandon work on the, then emerging, 2034 Local Plan, while the second required that continuing work on that plan had to reflect Government policy on housing. This has led to HIF1 which is extremely

[359] Mr Williams POE paragraphs 2.34 & 2.35
[360] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 4.12
[361] Mr Tamplin POE paragraphs 4.4 & 4.5
[362] Mr Tamplin Summary POE paragraph 6
[363] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 4.11

expensive, inflexible, unsustainable and contrary to local and national government policy.[364]

12.14. The statutory plans are based on historic administrative areas which have little relevance to the day-to-day form and function of the area and mean there is no single strategic or local statutory land use plan for the area as a whole.[365]

12.15. Although both statutory development plans include a proposal to build HIF1 or a similar road, this policy aim is outweighed by the far weightier material considerations of the imperatives of combatting climate change and implementing genuinely sustainable development. The VWH Local Plan 2031 is out-of-date in terms of NPPF guidance, and together with the SOLP is in the process of being replaced by the emerging JLP. The JLP is subject to consultation and should be afforded some weight[366].

12.16. The LTCP was adopted in June 2022. Policy 36 also promotes a decide and provide approach. The statutory planning context of this area which would be affected by HIF1, shows there is little sense of urgency in tackling climate change.

12.17. The application has no cogent basis for delivering a sufficient supply of homes, or for building a strong, competitive national economy within this important area for the development of a knowledge-based economy in accordance with chapters 5 and 6 of the NPPF.[367]

12.18. The DGT Vision seeks to promote the sustainable transport modes that are embedded in the DGT masterplan. These include alternatives to travel by car. By creating compact, mixed-use and transit-oriented development it is also possible to reduce local congestion.[368]

12.19. The DGTDP included all four elements of HIF1. The inclusion of these infrastructure projects may be due to pressure from OCC and VHW. Consequently, the existing statutory and non-statutory plans and policies for the Didcot area are of very limited, or of no, practical value for combatting the over-riding imperative of climate change.

12.20. The Council's Cabinet have commissioned a new plan and work is in progress. There is great potential at Didcot to create an attractive environment and a effective transport system meeting the environmental imperatives. There is no shortage of local guidance and examples elsewhere of what a properly integrated transport and development plan which would meet the environmental and mode shift objectives of national and local policies should contain.

[364] Mr Tamplin paragraphs 4.6-4.8
[365] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 4.12
[366] Mr Tamplin paragraphs 4.14 & 4.15
[367] POETS Statement of Case p3
[368] Mr Tamplin POE 4.18 & 4.19

Decide and Provide

12.21. HIF1 is a result of using the discredited predict and provide approach to transport planning in and around Didcot, instead of the adopted decide and provide approach required by LTCP Policy 36. Decide and provide is based on an approach by first deciding what should be the preferred future situation and then providing the means to work towards that future in a manner which can accommodate uncertainty.[369]

12.22. OCC witnesses suggest that a decide and provide approach has been followed or has been taken into account. In support, a factoring of the traffic generation assumptions for new development by 80% plus the provision of "high standard" slow mode facilities and improved public transport is quoted. There is no evidence that the decide and provide approach has been taken into account. The visioning and scenario testing, as described in the TRICS and OCC advice requirements for a proper 'Decide and Provide' approach have not been undertaken. Additionally, there has been no assessment of mode shares arising from the transport changes. There are no explanations in the Transport Assessment, the ES or the Statement of Case of the application of a decide and provide approach.[370]

12.23. POETS welcome the draft text for consultation of proposed revisions to the NPPF, especially those in Chapter 8, "Delivering Community Needs", paragraphs 6 & 7, subheaded " A 'vision-led approach to transport planning'. We believe this fully supports POETS' case to the Inquiry that the called-in application should be refused permission.

Traffic Forecasts/Modelling

12.24. Professor Goodwin clarified that he did not think the road traffic projections were necessarily a predict and provide core surrounded by decarbonisation language. He stated that the projections are perfectly capable of being used to support decarbonisation, demand management, alternative policy options and an integrated consideration of all modes of transport, with recognition of the key importance of uncertainty.[371]

12.25. Professor Goodwin drew attention to the DfT changes to the advice on transport project appraisal, including the analysis of economic and social impacts, since the original work was done on HIF1. These included changes to the level, structure and interpretation of DfT traffic forecasts at a national level, and changes in the advice by DfT on how these forecasts should be handled when appraising specific local or strategic road proposals. The changes resulted in a new format for the DfT's 2022 NRTP, and the treatment of '*uncertainty*' in appraisals.[372]

[369] Mr Tamplin POE Summary paragraph 5
[370] Mr Williams POE p.5 and Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 5.16
[371] Professor Goodwin POE p.7
[372] Professor Goodwin Summary POE paragraph 4

12.26. Claudia Currie, on behalf of the applicant, states that methods and assumptions used in her modelling and assessments were TAG compliant at the time the work was originally done. Whilst this may be the case, they are not compliant with TAG as it is now.[373]

12.27. The applicant's appraisal was made before the onset of Brexit, Covid19, and the increased recognition of the effects of climate change and the importance of policies to combat it, both nationally and in Oxfordshire. Professor Goodwin considers that these matters radically change the forecasts of traffic which would now be appropriate. Therefore, even if the Paramics simulation is correct on the basis of the earlier forecasts, it would not necessarily accurately represent the relevant current base level, or the factors leading to change.[374]

12.28. Since 2018 the DfT's forecasts of road traffic nationally have been based on a range of alternative different futures rather than a most probable value of traffic growth. In 2022 this was formalised in the idea of '*Common Analytical Scenarios*' comprising a core and seven alternative trajectories for the future. The revised range of national traffic growth in the forecasting period varied from 8% to 54% over 35 years. [375]

12.29. It is recommended that appraisals should use all the scenarios for big or complex interventions, with a simplified appraisal for smaller interventions. The current approach tests success under a wide range of possible futures. The core scenario is sometimes used as an independent scenario approximately in the middle of the others, but it is not considered to be the most probable.

12.30. In all of them the same policy presumption was applied, namely only already completely committed and funded policy and infrastructure changes should be included in the forecasts. Any effects of potential policy decisions not yet taken or funded would need to be calculated in addition to the range of scenarios. This would make the range of future possibilities even greater.[376]

12.31. For local schemes the national forecasts need to be adapted, according to local circumstances, using local models - for example the variable demand model used by OCC. This requires a form of Scenario Analysis, which should address key questions, for each of the scenarios, both in the Outline Business Case stage, which is normally presented for public examination, and at the Full Business Case stage. These include whether under the different scenarios the intervention is effective in reducing congestion or crowding; whether there are any adverse effects; whether it is economically viable and whether it provides value for money.[377]

[373] INQ 21 Professor Goodwin Opening Statement p.1
[374] Professor Goodwin POE p.9
[375] INQ 21 Professor Goodwin Opening Statement p.3
[376] INQ 21 Professor Goodwin Opening Statement p.2
[377] Professor Goodwin POE paragraph 13 p.4

12.32. It is no longer acceptable to calculate benefit cost ratios, and value for money, by reference to a dominating '*most probable*' or '*central*' traffic forecast. The assessment criteria must take into account a wide variety of different scenarios of the future, marked by substantially higher and lower levels of traffic growth and the factors underpinning them, with the intention of establishing that the Scheme provides good value for money even if the original forecasts or planning assumptions turn out to be substantially wrong.[378]

12.33. If a project does not show value for money in a wide range of different possible futures then consideration should be given to whether it should be changed. This would have been relevant to answering the questions of value for money under high and low traffic growth, and robustness to a wide range of different futures.

12.34. The appraisal does not need to be updated to reflect this new guidance - unless it would have a material effect on the appraisal. Professor Goodwin judges that to carry out such analysis would potentially have a very material effect, because the new guidance enables questions to be addressed which simply have not been considered.[379]

Induced traffic

12.35. POETS state that induced traffic is the additional traffic which results from the provision of additional road capacity which reduces travel times. It is influenced by convenience, comfort and other conditions, as well as the availability and attractiveness of other modes of travel. The only response included in the Paramics modelling is the choice of route travelled, for the two cases with and without the Schemes, but both taking the development as given.

12.36. The provision of additional road capacity may in fact change behaviour in the ways described, and such induced traffic is therefore likely to occur. The Paramics model does not have the facility to make such calculations. Induced traffic would have a negative impact on the HIF results even if it is just 10% of the number of trips from the housing and employment growth, since traffic speeds will be lower than calculated, and the benefits therefore less. Taking account of induced traffic will have the effect of further reducing the predicted benefits of both reduction in congestion and reduction in CO_2.[380]

12.37. The question is whether the combined effect of the development and the road results in a more car dependent lifestyle, a dynamic process which tends to reduce the quality of public transport, and location of facilities, triggering a sort of vicious circle in which the end result is indeed worse for all. This would depend, for example, on parking policies, density, provision of facilities like shops, frequency of buses, access to rail services, cycling and pavement standards, schools, doctors etc. But the

[378] Professor Goodwin POE paragraph 4 p.2
[379] Professor Goodwin Opening Statement p.3
[380] Professor Goodwin POE p.10

traffic forecasts would need to be different depending on the outcome of all these decisions. It is difficult to see how this would be done using the Paramics model, which implicitly will be assuming particular details of development whether or not they have yet been defined.[381]

Effects to the East

12.38. The Golden Balls roundabout lies to the north of Berinsfield on the A4074 where it intersects with the B4015. POETS submit that as a consequence of HIF1 the Clifton Hampden Bypass would re-route traffic that currently uses the A415 to pass through the village to access this roundabout (Link 41). They suggest that between 2024 and 2034 with the Scheme there would be a 196% increase in traffic using Link 41, and 93% decrease over the same period for traffic using the existing route (Link 39) and the impact of this on the roundabout junctions was not assessed by the Transport Assessment. [382] POETS state that although the traffic model included that junction, it was not included in the junction assessments provided for the Inquiry.

12.39. POETS also consider that additional traffic would be attracted to the Golden Balls roundabout, including north-south traffic between A34 and East Oxford / M40 seeking to avoid congested roads such as the A34 and the Oxford Ring Road. Parts of the A34 and the Oxford Ring Road are overloaded during morning and evening peaks, and this is likely to be exacerbated with general traffic growth and planned developments north and south of the Ring Road.[383]

12.40. It is quite clear that the routes to the east of Didcot up to A423 and the Oxford Ring Road as well as the route across to M40 via B4015 and A329 would experience substantial increases in traffic from the Didcot proposals. These should have been considered and evaluated. Presumably on the basis that separate studies of the Golden Balls junction and A4074 are planned, the County chose not to include that junction in the Didcot HIF1 assessments despite having the capability of doing so. Those effects and the potentially huge consequential costs, land acquisition and environmental degradation arising,(including at the conservation village of Nuneham Courtenay) should have been included and taken into account in the study costings and environmental assessments of the HIF1 proposals.

12.41. The substantial increase in traffic predicted for the Golden Balls junction will be accompanied by similar substantial increases in Nuneham Courtenay, a historic conservation village which has not been assessed.[384]

[381] Professor Goodwin POE p.10
[382] Mr William POE paragraph 3.3. The table on which Mr Willa's relies were subsequently updated Ms Curries POE Appendix CC2.9 p. 92 & 94
[383] Mr Williams POE paragraphs 3.5 & 3.5.1
[384] Mr Williams POE p. 9

Abingdon

12.42. Abingdon lies on the A415 to the west of the proposed roundabout near Zouch Farm. At that point most drivers going towards Abingdon have no choice but to pass through Abingdon town centre and its gyratory road system. The traffic already carried by the A415 already has significant environmental effects on the town centre. Additional traffic on this part of the A415 between Abingdon, Didcot and between Abingdon and CSC would be increased due to the proposed Culham housing site, the development of CSC, and the substantial proposed new housing and employment sites in Didcot and Milton Park.[385] This has not been assessed in the ES. Given that traffic flows and associated congestion between Abingdon and CSC are referred to by the Minister for Net Zero and Climate Change in her request for this application to be called-in that seems an inexplicable omission.[386]

12.43. Abingdon Central Area Regeneration Framework (CARF) of February 2023 was produced by the VoWH. The Abingdon CARF aims for the reconfiguration of Abingdon Bridge, including permanent partial, one way only, flow of traffic across Abingdon Bridge, which currently carries the A415 between the town and CSC. Whilst the Abingdon CARF is no more than a material consideration, its content demonstrates a move towards sustainable transport, and POETS adopt, fully support and commend the Abingdon CARF aims.[387]

Alternatives

12.44. Sustainable transport for the Science Vale area of the County is possible. The Didcot to Oxford rail line serves the existing stations of Didcot Parkway, Appleford, Culham and Radley. This system could be improved to provide higher frequency passenger services and provision of park and ride provision to encourage modal shift from road to rail.[388]

12.45. High-speed bus services between Didcot and central Oxford using lower cost, lighter structures for a Thames crossing, and for the viaduct and bridge south to Appleford Sidings, on which bus access would add flexibility. This could be implemented via a wider Thames bridge over the river where the railway crosses the river. It could also serve the four stations mentioned above using a segregated busway system.[389]

12.46. Each local station could be a hub for more frequent, smaller and more adaptable, buses to link with the nearby villages using existing roads. This could be implemented more quickly than HIF1 and would need little capital investment beyond secure cycle parking at stations. A further sustainable option could use the existing track bed of the former Abingdon – Radley branch line along most of its route to a point close to

[385] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 3.3
[386] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 5.4
[387] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 5.6
[388] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 5.9
[389] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 5.13

Abingdon town centre. This would enable a higher frequency and more reliable service to serve Abingdon using some of the existing roads there such as the Ring Road.[390]

12.47. A new cycleway and footway around the entire area of Science Vale could be largely segregated from highways by constructing simple, light pavements or using existing resurfaced laneways at very little cost.[391]

12.48. These alternative sustainable transport suggestions offer a realistic alternative to HIF1 and would be far more beneficial to the whole population of this part of southern Oxfordshire. If this is recognised by both the Inspector and the SoS it should therefore lead to refusal of the HIF1 planning application.[392]

12.49. POETS contend that in this case there are existing realistic and reasonable alternatives to what is proposed by this application, which could and should be adopted in preference to those in the application. This is because the Applicant has failed to approach the claimed requirement for infrastructure to address the traffic congestion and delay to all road vehicles by generating a sustainable transport system as an alternative to road building.

Funding

12.50. The funding position of the Scheme is a further example of the "*smoke and mirrors*" approach of the applicant to the evidence given to the Inquiry. It appears to clarify the position on funding by introducing more uncertainty and raising more questions than it answers.[393]

12.51. There are four streams of funding, and with the exception of developer contributions, all originate from the public purse. At the date of Mr Mann's proof (30 January 2024) this represented about 5.5% of the total funds available. The projected costs of the Scheme is about £36.4m higher than previously and additional funding agreed by Homes England to cover the revised budget. As a result, the developer contributions, which remain at £16,442,000, is now only 4.8% of the Scheme total costs.[394]

12.52. The purpose of building HIF1 is, according to the applicant, to provide the essential highway infrastructure to enable the building of about 20,000 additional dwellings in and around Didcot in line with the adopted development plan allocations. It seems that the Scheme is simply offering a huge financial subsidy to house builders and other developers in this part of Oxfordshire. POETS would also point to the absence of information or evidence in Mr Mann's proof on any further funding which the Scheme may require.[395]

[390] Mr Tamplin POE summary paragraph 10
[391] Mr Tamplin POE paragraph 5.15
[392] Mr Tamplin POE Summary paragraph 11
[393] INQ 72 POETS closing submissions paragraph 1
[394] INQ 72 POETS closing submissions paragraphs 2 & 3
[395] INQ 72 POETS closing submissions paragraph 5

12.53. Mr Mann's Note refers to a "*number of conditions [having] been included in the offer.*", but gives no explanation or outline of what those conditions contain. Because this is public expenditure, the public should be given at least an outline of these conditions and how they may affect the viability of the Scheme itself and whether they may affect the financial viability of the County Council itself. This is a matter of legitimate concern and transparency.[396]

12.54. This unknown commitment is said by Mr Mann to have been "considered" by no less than five Government Departments or Agencies. Of those five, two, the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities and the Department for Transport, are directly involved in the process of also considering the Scheme as a planning application and as the subject of a Compulsory Purchase Order. Those two Departments are therefore to be judge and jury in their own case. POETS hope that there are very strong, unbreachable Chinese Walls between the two different functions involved in consideration and approval of the planning application and the Compulsory Purchase Order on the one hand, and approval and confirmation of the funding of those very matters. [397]

12.55. POETS are aware of information from reliable, reputable, sources, that further negotiations may be ongoing between the County Council and Homes England to secure yet more funding even beyond the additional contingency referred to. This adds to POETS planning concerns that the Scheme is an outdated and unnecessary proposal when a combination of smaller scale, sustainable transport options to serve proposed housing and employment development in and around Didcot would represent far better value for money and help to tackle the urgent imperative of combatting climate change, in accordance with the County Council's LTCP policies and proposals.[398]

12.56. This Scheme was blundered into by OCC announcing that it had been awarded funding by Government to build a road scheme to enable the building of 100,000 homes across Oxfordshire. Those homes were "*assessed objectively*" as being "*needed*" by the same Government. The geographical distribution of those homes was decided by a call for sites, that is, anyone who owned land and would be willing to sell it for housing could offer it to the LPAs to include that land in their development plans and contribute to the "*objectively assessed*" need of those LPAs. Hence in southern Oxfordshire we have ended up with a scatter of sites and to serve the inevitable travel demand generated by the scatter of dwellings, the response of the Highway Authority was to build another road.[399]

[396] INQ 72 POETS closing submissions paragraph 6
[397] INQ 72 POETS closing submissions paragraph 7
[398] INQ 72 POETS closing submissions paragraph 8
[399] INQ 72 POETS closing submissions paragraph 9

13. The Case for East Hendred Parish Council (Rule 6 Party)

[*This summary of the case for East Hendred Parish Council is based on the closing submissions, the proofs of evidence and other submissions to the Inquiry.]*

13.1. East Hendred Parish Council objects to the HIF1 scheme on the grounds that the transport modelling is not robust, does not fully assess impact on the area, including West of the A34 (Rowstock, East Hendred and Wantage), and does not make an acceptable provision for sustainable travel.

Local objectives for the Scheme

13.2. Whilst sustainable development is at the heart of the Framework, it is not at the heart of the appeal proposals. Achieving sustainable development and promoting sustainable travel outweighs the need for consistency with Government policies for the delivery of a sufficient supply of homes and building a strong competitive economy.

13.3. The main impact of the changes in the December 2023 NPPF is to reduce the housing requirement to that based on the Standard Method.

13.4. Even if full weight was given to Policy CP17 of the out-dated 2016 Vale LPP1, the appeal proposals would be inconsistent with LPP1 Strategic Objectives S08/09, Strategic Policies CP33, CP34 and CP35, and LPP2 Policies 15b, 16b, and 18a on sustainable travel. CP17 is 8 years out-of-date.

13.5. The Local Plans have been superseded by LTCP. Strategic needs have changed dramatically and do not support the Scheme. The reason for the JLP is due to the difference in housing requirement as assessed by the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the standard method. It is unsound relies on data within the 2001 census which is more than 20 years old. Plans are considered out-of-date if they are not consistent with the Framework. Thus, limited weight should be given to these housing requirements.

13.6. The NPPF, paragraph 226, gives weight to emerging Local Plans that have reached Regulation 18 stage. The 5-year housing requirement has been reduced to a 4-year requirement. The regulation 18 JLP reduces the housing requirement, based on the standard method. Weight should be given to sustainable travel in Policies SP3, HOU1 and IN2, on settlement pattern, housing and infrastructure within the JLP.

13.7. The OCC Planning Statement states that HIF1 will directly deliver 11,711 new homes and support delivery of around 18,000 homes.[400] However, Policy HOU1 within the JLP proposes a 25% reduction in the 2019 Vale LLP2 (and S. Oxfordshire) Housing Requirements. of 22,000 new homes

[400] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.14

(and 20,000 new homes) to 14,390 new homes (and 17,000 new homes), 2021-2041, or c.600-800 new homes per year.[401]

13.8. Policy IN2 of the emerging JLP requires development proposals to:

a) maximise active and sustainable travel opportunities

b) assess "*viable active and sustainable travel choices"* and

c) provide access "*in line with the OCC Transport User Hierarchy*."[402]

13.9. The proposed Didcot Garden Town Policy SP3:

"reduces reliance on motorised vehicles and promotes a step-change towards Active and Sustainable Travel and public transport through the creation of a highly legible, attractive and accessible movement network".[403]

13.10. The need for intervention is based on the targets of the LTCP to replace or remove 1 in 4 car trips by 2030. Its vision includes:

- Decarbonisation is the "key overriding challenge."
- Need to reach net-zero to achieve government decarbonisation plan 2021.
- Reducing the need to travel by better walking, cycling, digital connectivity.
- The growth in car use has negative impacts on congestion and the environment.
- Scale of future growth needs more radical solutions to improve transport.
- Tackle inequality, health, inclusivity, road safety.
- Enhance our environment.[404]

Decide and Provide

13.11. The Origin Review LPA Technical Note accepts that the decide and provide approach is at the heart of the LTCP, because it decides on the preferred future, provides the means to work towards it, can accommodate uncertainty, offers the opportunity for more positive transport planning, and helps implement a transport hierarchy by considering walking and cycling first.

13.12. The Review argues that the decide and provide approach has been taken into account because the Scheme contributes towards providing modal

[401] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.5
[402] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.4
[403] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.4
[404] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.8

shift, by delivering walking and cycleways adjoining the A4130 to Clifton Hampden. It state that the Scheme would also link with the Milton Heights bridge, the Science Vale and Strategic Active Travel networks and schemes in the LCWIP, as well as help bus journeys.[405]

13.13. The 2021 Transport Assessment is based on the superseded LTP which adopts a predict and provide approach. It uses out-dated National Road Traffic Projections and generic trip rates, which are based on the assumption that historic trends can be extended into the future, whilst ignoring current and future trends, such as behavioural changes in working from home, or climate emergency policies in Local Plans and the LTCP.[406]

13.14. The OCC Transport User Hierarchy states that road schemes will only be considered after all other options, including traffic reduction, have been explored. The development of the Scheme did not adopt a decide and provide approach. The proposed road schemes have not fully assessed traffic reduction options against the relevant Local Plan and LTCP Policies.

13.15. The Origin Review states that the Scheme contributes to modal shift by linking with the Strategic and Science Vale Active Travel and LCWIP schemes, which do not form part of the application. The £218m cost of the 9.6km road schemes would prejudice the delivery of short-term schemes in the Science Vale Strategic & Didcot Active Travel, Cycleway network & LCWIP schemes which are prioritised above road schemes in the LTCP.[407]

13.16. The recent WMS and draft NPPF paragraph 112 support a vision led approach to transport planning and challenge the outdated assumption of automatic traffic growth.

Baseline Conditions

13.17. The Travel to Work in Oxford and Oxfordshire 2021 Census results prepared by Oxford City Business Intelligence Unit, Dec 2022, show an increasing modal share by car driver, compared to the 2011 census. Although it took place during t Covid, respondents were asked to give their usual mode of transport before and during Covid.[408]

13.18. The 2013 OSM's out-dated NRTP should be replaced by the Behaviour Scenario in the 2022 NRTP projections for external trips, because they better reflect more recent changes in behaviour, a Decide and Provide approach, reduce car travel by car, and meet zero-carbon objectives.

13.19. Baseline Conditions in 2022 show the failure of trend-based projections. In particular they indicate:

[405] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.18
[406] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.19
[407] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.22
[408] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 3.1

i) bus usage in Oxfordshire has fallen from 41m pre-Covid to 34m passengers (-17%),

ii) rail passengers using Oxford station fell from 8m down to 6.5m users,

iii) rail passengers using Didcot Parkway fell from 3.3m to 2.3m users,

iv) Sheffield Supertram passengers fell from 15m to 8m users.

v)The DLR usage of the Lewisham Ext. fell from 10m to 2m per year,

vi) The Third London Airport Royal Commission projected the need for 5 runways by 1980, although a 3rd runway at Heathrow has yet to be constructed.[409]

13.20. The 2018 NRTP clearly failed to take account of this recent DfT data. A larger decline would occur where the percentage working from home significantly exceeds the national average. Working from home in the two Districts (41%-42%) significantly exceeds the England average of 30%.

13.21. Traffic flows on the following routes have not been assessed:

- *Links 1,3 and 8* The amended model results show no difference in traffic flows on the A34 and A4130 between the Do Minimum and the Scenario 5c Option.[410] That means that the assessment of the Milton Interchange for these options, in paragraph 6.9.1-9 of the Transport Assessment Part 1, is no longer credible or robust evidence.
- *Link 8,* the Transport Assessment predicts 4,000 additional trips would be generated West of the A34, but 14,000 additional daily trips are predicted on Link 37 to the East of the Model area. This is not credible.
- *Link 8*, flows west of the model area to/from on A417 to Wantage, joining the A4130 at Rowstock, should be assessed, based on a larger model area.
- *Link 10*, how is A4130 Science Bridge justified if predicted traffic remains unchanged? It provides no benefits from a net reduction in daily trips or mode share by car.
- *Link 35*, Culham Bridge attracts +4,000 (amended to +2,000) daily trips between 2024 and 2034 Do Minimum, what is the projected daily flow on the proposed bridge in Do Something scenario?

[409] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 3.4

[410] Mr Turnbull refers to scenario 5c. This was an option considered as part of the consideration of Transport Impacts in relation to the SOLP (CD G.01.1 – G.01.08) Ms Currie in her rebuttal evidence has assumed that this is a reference to the 2034 DS scenario with the ES. Having regard to the context of Mr Turnbull's comments and the fact that his criticisms relate to the ES, in the absence of any information to the contrary I have made the same assumption. Accordingly, I have substituted DS for scenario 5c for the remainder of Mr Turnbull's comments.

- *Links 35 and 37*, the Origins and Destinations of the extra 14,000 daily trips should be assessed, to identify the extent of the area impacted by the proposed scheme.[411]

13.22. The NRTP, adjusting for Covid shows that car traffic remained below pre-pandemic levels in February 2022, with traffic levels 11% lower than expected if the pandemic had not occurred.[412] Vehicle operating costs are projected to decline for electric cars and increase for petrol and diesel cars. Whilst petrol and diesel cars out-number electric cars, vehicle operating costs are projected to increase and reduce traffic growth.[413]

13.23. The OCC 2018 Systra Paramatic model was based on 2016/2017 traffic surveys. It is described as "not multimodal so cannot automatically account for improved NMU infrastructure, therefore demand reduction is used as a proxy".[414]

13.24. Without additional modelling, the applicant cannot demonstrate the estimated traffic flows on the network in 2020, 2024 and 2034, the changes to the volume/capacity junction calculations, or journey time savings, from a reduction in traffic flows from the use of the latest 2022 NRTP Behavioural Scenario, in place of the superseded 2018. The 25% reduction in the housing requirement in the emerging JLP Plan is likely to reduce the planning input into the transport model, and the growth of traffic.[415]

13.25. Similarly, the model assumes a 70,000 sq.m B1 office use trip generation for employment at Harwell Campus, 2024-34. This relates to a withdrawn planning application at Fermi Gate, (ref: P20/V1667/O) for 70,000 sq.m. floorspace with 40% B1 Office Use, and 60% B2 General Industry use. This assumption over-estimates traffic growth at Harwell.[416]

13.26. A 25% reduction in the housing requirement and a 33% reduction in car parking requirements cannot be accommodated by the current Model trip generation assumptions. Further Modelling is therefore required.[417]

Extent of the modelled area

13.27. The LPA Technical Note and Dec 2023 Origin Review and LPA Technical Note argue that traffic increases in Abingdon are due to additional houses, not HIF1. The Scheme increases traffic on the A415 by 5,000 daily trips (52%) compared to the Do-Minimum Case in 2034.[418]

[411] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.10
[412] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.24
[413] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.24
[414] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.24
[415] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 4.17
[416] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.8
[417] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 3.9
[418] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.11

13.28. It is not appropriate for OCC to rely on future planning applications to provide mitigation, because there is no certainty on the timetable or costs of any mitigation for additional traffic that has been generated by the Scheme.

13.29. The proposed scheme is likely to have significant traffic impacts outside the traffic model area, e.g. on the A34, Abingdon, Golden Balls Roundabout and Wantage, which have not been fully assessed. The Transport Assessment shows a c.8%-14% growth in daily traffic flows between the 2024 Base Year and 2034 Do Minimum Option, on the A34 (Links 1 and 3), +18% west of the A34 (Link 3), +25% on A41304 (Link 10), and +25% on Culham bridge (Link 34) and +18% at Culham station (Link 37), with increases of +2,000 -8,000 vehicles per day (2024-2034).[419]

13.30. The Origin/LPA argument relating to the Golden Balls roundabout is that the Scheme would not increase travel through the junction, there would be a change in direction. However, changes in the direction of traffic affect junction capacity at the Golden Balls roundabout.

13.31. In my experience a wider Model Area is required to assess transport impact well beyond the limits of the road scheme, especially on river crossings, and where in 2021 c.40% of journeys to work are over 10kms.[420]

[419] Mr Turnbull POE paragraphs 2.7 & 2.8
[420] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.6

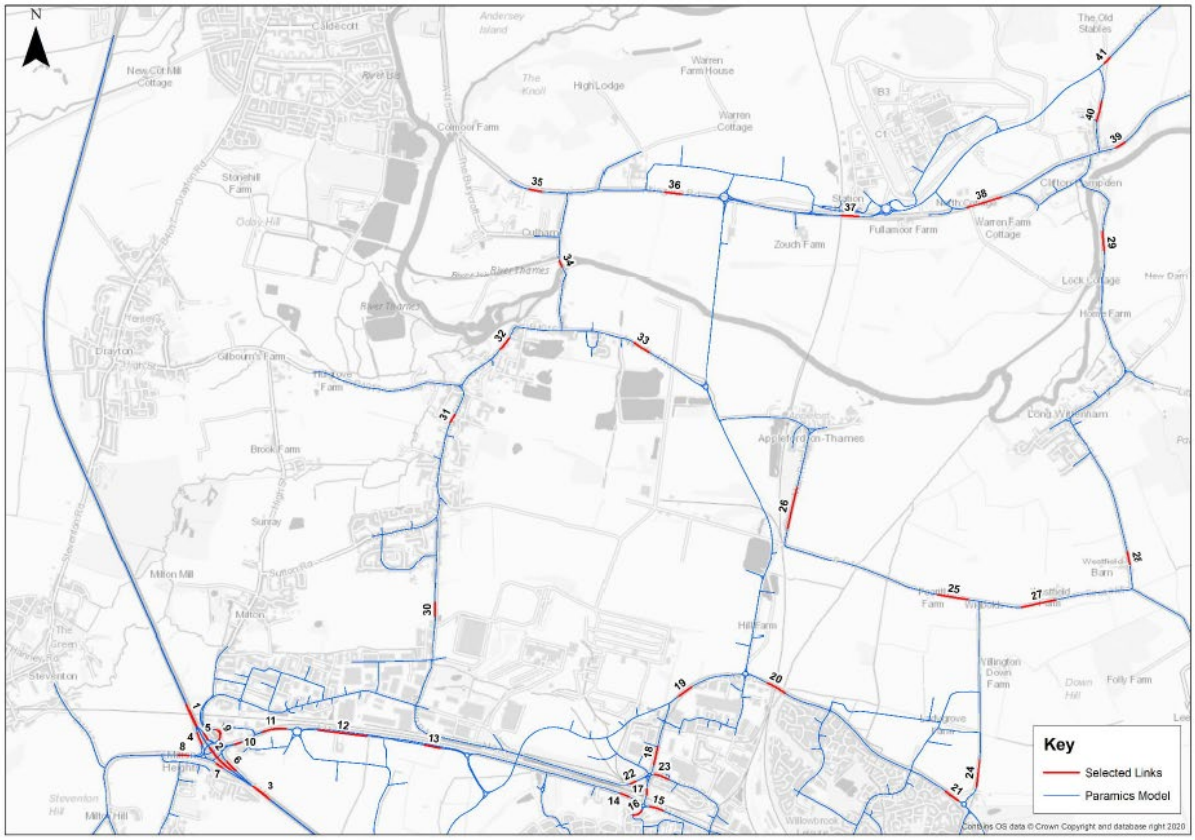


Figure 16.4: Selected Links for Assessment

Behavioural Change

13.32. The 2021 Census results showed that 41%-42% of those aged over 16 years economically active usually worked from home in The Vale and South Oxfordshire. The average figure for England is 30%.[421] These results reflect a change in behavioural patterns since Covid but have been excluded from the Journey to Work by Mode Share tables. Research by the British Chambers of Commerce found that only 26% of the 1,000 companies surveyed expected that their staff would be fully in-office staff over the next 5-years. It concluded that working from home is here to stay.[422]

13.33. A further behavioural change scenario assumes that increased flexible-working, on-line shopping, and reduced licence holders by younger adults, projects an 8% change 2025-2060. OCC traffic modelling was based on 2017 traffic surveys adjusted to 2018 NTPR for 2020 base year, 2024 and 2034. The Parish's case is that the latest NRTP 2022 should be used since new habits and expectations have arisen in the last 2.5 years due to these factors. These more recent projections would form a reasonable alternative 2034 option.[423]

[421] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 4.1
[422] The Times articles, 16th and 17th December 2023
[423] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 4.15

13.34. Due to changes in habits by occupants of existing development a 70% to 80% demand should be adopted for all development with a trip rate of 0.457 in the AM Peak and 0.423 in the PM Peak, to account for Didcot Garden Town principles for modal shift. The Parish Council seek the results of the modelling data of traffic flows in 2031 and 2034 without the HIF1 Scenario, and the model run with 70% of total demand. This would address the County and District Councils' sustainable transport objectives, the DGTDP's minimum modal split target and the LTCP performance indicators.[424]

13.35. Research Papers on Transport Emission Reduction Policies by Prof. Greg Marsden at Leeds University, and Bridging the Decarbonisation Gap by Keith Mitchell of Stantec, conclude that an overall 20% traffic reduction is needed deliver a net-zero transport system, not just 20% of planned growth indicated by Origin.[425]

13.36. The 5-year LLP1 review in December 2021 used the Standard Method. The current requirement is for 661 homes per year plus 183 homes to meet Oxford's unmet need, 2019-2031, a Housing Requirement of 844 dwellings per year. This is evidence indicating that the transport model exaggerates current traffic flows, as did Evidence to the recent Esso Research Centre, Milton Heights, Appeal Inquiry. This had the effect of increasing the impact of traffic, because it was from a smaller baseline traffic flow.[426]

13.37. The growth in traffic flows between 2024 and 2034 Do Minimum should have been assessed to see where the need for intervention should be addressed and inform the generation of alternative options.

13.38. My evidence provides the grounds for considering a lower predicted growth rate. This would reduce the need for the most-costly, environmentally harmful proposals, with the least benefits, i.e. the Science Bridge and River Thames Crossing. In my experience traffic delays are more commonly due to accidents or road works, than lack of capacity.[427]

Alternative Net Zero Carbon Options based on interventions that meet the following locally-based Needs and Objectives in the LTCP

13.39. There are a number of alternative Net Zero Carbon Options. These include:

- Reducing the need to travel by digital connectivity e.g. working from home.

[424] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.21
[425] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.11
[426] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 6.6
[427] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 2.7

- Supporting equality, health and well-being by active travel measures to enhance mobility to walk, cycle, and access to rail and bus travel, as attractive modes to achieve a step-change in active travel and public transport.

- Improving road safety by implementing the Strategic and Science Vale Cycle Network and December 2023 DGT WCIP.

- A public transport-led area transport strategy for CSC and new housing, with a rail journey time of 6 mins to Didcot, and 12 mins. to Oxford. It is based on the 2019 Oxford Futures/URBED Wolfson Award-winning Science Spine proposals from Didcot to Kidlington, linked to the 2024 OCC Oxford – Cowley BMW Works rail proposals. This gives access to rail services to London Marylebone and Milton Keynes/Cambridge by East-West rail. A phase 2 proposal includes a new Grove Station, in the VWHLP.

- A high frequency east-west feeder bus service between Wantage – Didcot Parkway- Wallingford, which could attract the support of both bus and rail operators, either segregated where possible from major roads like A417, A415, A4130, with an east-west route adjoining the Great Western Railway a potential alternative option, or with bus lanes.

- Supported by east-west and north-south high-quality express bus services, (5+ buses per hour), between Didcot, Milton Park, Abingdon, Wantage, Harwell Campus, with measures to reduce peak period delays for buses.

- Similarly, Science Park owners at Harwell Campus, Milton Park and CSC may be attracted to a jointly-funded (free?) high frequency bus service linking their sites to Didcot Parkway station on a north-south route. Harwell Campus has recently benefitted from a new 15-minute frequency bus service to Didcot Parkway, and active travel plans, funded by service charges raised by Harwell Campus from their tenants.

- Using innovative technology such as new Stadler trains with integrated bus/rail ticketing (used on the Sheffield Supertram tram rail). Using Culham Autonomous Buses (CAB), (as used at Harwell Campus) on a segregated busway to link the Campus, Culham station and within 200m of all new homes.

- Providing infrastructure for zero emission, electric bikes, buses, cars, HGVs.

- Network, parking and congestion management, from bus lanes and for Campus parking controls based on the new OCC parking standards.[428]

[428] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 5.20

13.40. Robust evidence is required covering impacts across a wider area to show acceptable provision for sustainable transport. This would include:

- Modelling a wider area covering Abingdon, Wantage, A4074.
- A housing requirement based on the 2023 NPPF-based Standard Method, and applying research/general industry-based trip rates for the Campuses,
- Applying the 2022 NRTP behavioural scenario.
- Assessing 70% of total vehicular demand for all development.
- Assessing 80% of total vehicular demand for all development.
- Using HIF1 funding from omitting the most-costly, environmentally harmful, schemes with limited benefits, the Science Bridge and River Thames Crossing.[429]

13.41. The Historic River Thames crossings are important heritage assets, individually for their group value. They provide the opportunity to regulate River Thames crossing traffic flows by altering the setting of timings on the traffic signalled crossings, in a similar way to that being applied to Oxford City. Traffic levels can be regulated on local roads serving historic villages in the rural area.[430]

13.42. The proposed scheme would increase road capacity across the River Thames. The impact would be to prejudice opportunities to reduce car commuter traffic into Oxford and within Oxfordshire, by reducing existing constraints provided by limited River Thames crossings.

13.43. East Hendred Parish Council proposes a rail and bus-based transport strategy for CSC. Enhanced rail and feeder bus frequencies and active travel measures would positively encourage a modal shift towards public transport, supported by a degree of traffic congestion on the A415.[431]

13.44. In DGT the traffic constraint of the Great Western Railway, separating the employment areas to the north from the residential areas to the south, is similar to Swindon. This is relevant to the Culham, Milton Park and Harwell Campuses, where a single owner can enforce a travel plan with parking controls, to secure a 25% reduction in car travel.[432]

13.45. The Swindon-Didcot-Oxford Connectivity Study by Steer and WSP reported on the lack of high frequency bus services, the absence of bus priority infrastructure, and the lack of east-west active travel infrastructure. these are the issues and objectives relevant to DGT, which the proposed scheme has not addressed, but should be in an alternative option.

[429] Mr Turnbull POE Conclusions p.31
[430] Mr Turnbull POE paragraphs 5.12 & 5.14
[431] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 5.15
[432] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 5.16

Modal Split

13.46. The Scheme offers 6 additional bus services in South Oxfordshire with a 10-30 mins frequency, estimated to provide a 3% increase in public transport share compared to the Do Minimum. These additional services appear to increase bus use from 167,000 to 176,000 passengers, but do not meet the target for 2031 in the DGTDP.[433]

13.47. The full Business Case for the Scheme must be provided to the Inquiry so that the claimed costs and benefits of the Scheme can be assessed. The absence of any cost-benefit analysis to compare journey time savings against estimated costs, based on advice in The Green Book means there is no means of assessing whether the Scheme represent poor or medium value for money.[434]

13.48. Pedestrians/cyclists at A34 Milton Interchange, going between Harwell Campus/East Hendred and Milton/Milton Park, have to use 6 sets of signalised pedestrian crossings and to cross two uncontrolled carriageways, which took 6-7 mins, in a survey carried out on 16th December 2023. This makes the A4130 unattractive for walkers and cyclists.[435]

13.49. The Scheme would reduce eastbound capacity on the A4130 West of the A34 (Link 10), to a single lane at the Trenchard Avenue junction to Milton Heights, to comply with the transport user's hierarchy in the LTCP to promote modal shift towards buses/cycles. With traffic growth constrained, there is less need to increase road capacity on the A4130 east of Milton Interchange (Links 10-13), as part of the HIF1 scheme.

13.50. Rejection of the road proposals need not restrain development as the elements of a new plan would be likely to be less controversial and possible to implement earlier than the completion of HIF1.

13.51. Whilst the Parish Council accepts that the Scheme could be considered as local transport infrastructure, it disagrees that it is a necessary improvement to local infrastructure in accordance with paragraph 155b) of the draft NPPF.

[433] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 7.4
[434] Mr Turnbull POE paragraph 9.1
[435] Mr Turnbull POE Paragraph 4.20

14. The case for others appearing at the Inquiry

[The summaries below represent the views of other parties appearing at the Inquiry and is based on the oral and written submissions.]

Councillor James Barlow (INQ 28)

14.1. I am a District Councillor in the Wallingford Ward in South Oxfordshire. Wallingford, Didcot and South Oxfordshire absolutely need better transport infrastructure to improve connectivity in our district. We need infrastructure that massively increases active travel and not simply a road primarily designed for privately-owned cars.

14.2. The settlements and surrounds affected by the proposed scheme will likely become at least as choked at peak times as they are today 6 months after HIF1 opens. The modelling used ignores induced demand and overestimates congestion without the Scheme.

14.3. Is this project a wise and prudent use of the public purse? HIF1 omits to incentivise the modal shifts really needed. It will funnel more traffic on to the A4074 North through Nuneham Courtney., making local connectivity worse for those coming from Wallingford and Henley north to Oxford. The bus route from Reading will similarly be affected.

14.4. This scheme is a product of OCC's out-moded 'predict and provide'. We need highways infrastructure fit for active and public transport based travel. This proposal is badly designed, it is also contrary to SODC's climate and nature recovery corporate plan themes.

14.5. Connectivity is possible with less destruction. How rigorously were more suitable alternatives explored? In the last 20 years we have recorded 4 of the 6 worst floods in Wallingford since the 19th century.

14.6. The distances and terrain make light-rail infrastructure and guided buses attractive options to link the communities concerned. The reality of cycling or walking alongside the designed noisy, high-speed, smelly transport route is actually an incentive for me to get in my car for the miles of road planned here. The schemeScheme seems to be similarly poorly designed when it comes to the realities of being a cyclist.

14.7. The Scheme is likely to go over budget, and this may impact OCC's ability to deliver other already massively stretched key services such as adult social care and already under pressure children's services for Wallingford's residents. This plan needs to be rejected, and one that doesn't mean we are on the end of even more extreme weather designed instead.

Councillor Nick Fielding Burcot and Clifton Hampden Parish Council (INQ 23)

14.8. We believe that local residents often have more understanding of the impact of planning changes than professional planners, engineers and others. Whilst we support the principle of a Clifton Hampden bypass, we

oppose the current proposal. Our views have partially been incorporated into the single response from the Neighbouring Parish Councils' Joint Committee, but there are some specific points we would like to emphasise.

14.9. HIF1 will result in serious damage to the washed over Green Belt status of our parish, with destruction of more than 130 mature trees, 27 copses and significant damage to hedgerows in the parish.

14.10. The road will result in major atmospheric and noise pollution to properties close to the proposed route. The ES suggests that the "loss of tranquillity" as a result of the Clifton Hampden by-pass will purportedly be reduced over a period of 15 years from "Large adverse" to "Slight adverse". We do not accept this statement.

14.11. The creation of a 3m-high noise barrier along part of the by-pass is not a good solution from the standpoint of villagers. First, we believe that it will only limit noise and not prevent it. Second, the barrier itself, unless hidden behind substantial tree and shrub covering, will be unsightly. Either way, villagers will lose the vistas towards Nuneham Park and the fields and trees in that direction. In terms of noise pollution, the ES suggests only 11 properties are likely to be seriously affected. However, with the possible construction of another 14 properties on the former allotments at Clifton Hampden, these should all be added to the total, as they will all back on to the new road.

14.12. More mitigation is needed to offset the predicted damage to the natural environment. The felling of so many trees will result in the loss of habitat for many birds, insects and mammals and the destruction of at least one badger sett. It will also break out substantial habitats into a patchwork of disconnected areas. Bats are likely to be seriously affected, despite plans for 'hop-overs'. The construction of the road and its subsequent heavy use is likely to severely disrupt, if not destroy, the foraging and migration routes of local mammals, including badgers, hedgehogs and several species of deer.

14.13. Mitigation is inadequate. Screening of the road from the village of Clifton Hampden is vital to reduce noise and to compensate for the loss of views into the surrounding countryside.

14.14. Provision for pedestrians and cyclists is very piecemeal and unlikely to be attractive to many users. In anticipation of development of the new Culham town, it is likely that cycle traffic between the new town and Clifton Hampden will increase. There should be segregated foot and cycleways and controlled crossings linking Clifton Hampden and the new Culham town.

14.15. The bypass lane at the Culham roundabout looks dangerous. It would be safer for all traffic to run through the roundabout rather than the short and shallow merge shown.

14.16. Existing footpaths into open countryside from the village of Clifton Hampden and from Croft Cottages will be disrupted. It will no longer be possible to walk directly from Clifton Hampden into the countryside. Instead, villagers will have to cross a very busy road.

14.17. We are unclear about the implications of the bypass for the Oxford Road leading from the bypass south to the A415. As things stand, it is likely to become a short-cut for traffic seeking to avoid the Golden Balls roundabout – in both directions. This could result in an actual increase in traffic through the parish. We believe that signage at this junction should discourage through traffic, perhaps 'for village access', '20mph' and/or 'restricted bridge ahead'. Currently, the corner tapers of this junction are very generous: if tighter, heavy goods vehicles and articulated lorries would be discouraged from turning south to Clifton Hampden. We are puzzled that your plans show the traffic lights at Clifton Hampden are likely to be over-stretched both before and after the bypass.

14.18. The northern terminus of the road at the Golden Balls roundabout is likely to become a chokepoint for the whole scheme, with consequent impacts on our parish. The high volumes of traffic being delivered to Golden Balls roundabout will find it difficult to travel on along the A4074 through Nuneham Courtenay, with its 20mph speed limit. If the by-pass goes ahead, we would also wish to see serious traffic-calming measures on the A415 though Burcot, including its possible downgrading to a B road, with cycle paths and speed bumps on the road between Clifton Hampden and the Berinsfield roundabout.

14.19. Light pollution is likely to severely affect Burcot and Clifton Hampden. An area within the Green Belt that is presently largely unaffected by artificial lighting will be subject to light from the large roundabouts just outside the village and from constant traffic movements along the new road. This has consequences for both wildlife and for residents of the parish.

14.20. In recent weeks serious flooding due to high rainfall and run-off from fields has been a major problem in both Clifton Hampden and Burcot with a number of homes being inundated. We see no sign that planners have factored in the impact of higher rainfall into their plans.

Councillor Robin Bennett Berinsfield & Garsington Division (INQ 24)

14.21. Didcot has a long way to catch up in terms of infrastructure to match the housing it has already had built, with much more to follow. Even if this entire Scheme proceeds as set out, Didcot will still have many more requirements, for example the Didcot LCWIP has identified multiple necessary interventions at a cost of many millions of pounds. The Garden Village in Berinsfield will also require additional infrastructure links. HIF1 requires large numbers of additional housing to make the business case, which in turn create additional infrastructure requirements.

14.22. Even when the local community has tried to negotiate with Communities and Local Government as long ago as 2019, ministers have stepped in.

The sense of local agency is lost. Given the keen interest and repeated interventions, it is probably best that the government is now taking responsibility for this decision via this Inquiry.

14.23. I do ask for consideration of the severe impacts particularly of where the road ends just outside Clifton Hampden, and where it connects towards the heavily congested approach to Abingdon Bridge.

14.24. We are assured that improvements will be made at Golden Balls roundabout, but they are not specified. Flooding and the carbon impact of the Scheme also need to be considered. I would hope for and expect more detail on this.

14.25. I do welcome some of the additional commitments that have been made since the original application. We are still waiting for the Didcot Area Travel Plan - this could at least ensure that we are not just adding more and more road capacity to refill with traffic and provide reassurance to residents that this is a fully thought through approach. I hope you'll urge the authority to provide this urgently.

Councillor Andrew P Jones Didcot Town Council (INQ 25)

14.26. There is a considerable need for improved infrastructure in and around Didcot, but if it is spent wisely, the budget can go further, better.

14.27. To cross over the railway, where it is on an embankment, and where the bridge would also have to cross over two roads as well, seems ridiculous. Where Manor Bridge crosses the railway, the railway is in a cutting. This is only 1km east of the proposed Science Bridge site. Siting a new bridge here should be significantly cheaper, though it would necessitate the A4130 improvements continuing a further 1km.

14.28. The design of the new road cuts Didcot in two. Travel from the centre of Didcot, south of the railway, to Didcot Town Football Club, Willowbrook Leisure Centre, or Oak Tree Health Centre, would travel on the existing A4130, past Screwfix, and into Ladygrove from the North, as Cow Lane bridge is one-way only. With the new road layout, this traffic, (including bicycles) would have to turn right, at a T junction, across a fast road, with more traffic. Traffic from Milton Park will also be faced with this turn right at a T junction. If this route is to be retained, it should not be built, until the Cow Lane bridge has been rebuilt with two-way traffic. (see diagram at INQ25)

14.29. When the proposed road leaves the Northern Perimeter Road, why does it go over an expensive, noise emitting viaduct, when it could be routed further West, and mostly follow existing roadways.

14.30. This proposed road will divert additional traffic to Golden Balls and Nuneham Courtenay. So until these are improved and bypassed, the new Thames Bridge should have an HGV restriction placed on it.

14.31. I propose a high-level foot and cycle bridge, bypassing the Manor Bridge and "death roundabout" for cyclists heading towards Milton Park, and easing the route for those heading onto the Northern Perimeter Road.

Councillor Mark Beddow East Hendred Parish Council (INQ 28)

14.32. OCC Planning and Regulation Committee now take a neutral position for this imposed Inquiry.

14.33. The connection of the HIF1 to the Milton Interchange will cause further overloading of the interchange. This will lead to longer tailbacks for the increasing A417 traffic from the large Kingsgrove development in Wantage. Already this causes traffic flow stalling of the A34 North at the interchange in rush hour. OCC Highways limited modelling with pre-pandemic data which did not include data from Wantage traffic flow.

14.34. The JET project is now shut down after a tritium / deuterium burn which will have activated the facility. I visited it in 1983 with my father, forty years ago. As a means of power generation JET is a failure. Fusion power will not be developed in my lifetime or my daughter's lifetime. Due to climate change we should not be adding further carbon dioxide to the atmosphere by extended road development for petrol powered cars.

Councillor Charlie Hicks (CD N.30)

14.35. The application should be rejected because it does not align with LTCP Policy 36, specifically parts b, d or e, nor does it align with the sister document to the LTCP called "Implementing 'Decide & Provide': Requirements for Transport Assessments".

14.36. Both the OSM and the Didcot Paramics model use 'predict and provide' with a small accommodation of demand reduction for future developments. A 'decide and provide' approach to HIF1 would start with the travel mode share aiming for, and then design the transport infrastructure and developments to achieve that mode share.

14.37. The design features for new development should include:

- Make the developments walkable, with local amenities and walkable infrastructure. As part of this, make the developments denser so there is higher demand for local shops and amenities that are not car dependent. This will internalise movements.

- With new transport infrastructure, do not increase the road capacity for cars, as this induces new demand for car trips.

- Design more space for walking, cycling and public transport in the infrastructure that's built.

- Join up new developments predominantly with public transport, for example by ensuring good active travel connectivity to existing train stations.

14.38. Delivering HIF1 would mean the Council is very likely to overshoot the LTCP 2030 targets on 25% car trip reduction. The Paramics model likely underestimates the 2034 traffic flows of building a road because it does not include or LGV/HGV movements nor does it include the induced demand effects of increasing road capacity for cars.

14.39. The evidence in the CCC progress report to Parliament suggests that, to get the UK's surface transport on track to the Paris Agreement, all road schemes should undergo a Net Zero Roads Review, like in Wales (which includes in the criteria that road building should not increase road capacity for cars). Given that this project significantly increases road capacity for cars, it is likely that an independent review would find it is not aligned to Net Zero.

Robin Draper (INQ 8)

14.40. I was initially a supporter of the Scheme with a new bridge across the Thames, however the Scheme and the modelling that underpins it is flawed. The Scheme fails to meet any of the stated aims of the project. Nowhere in those aims, was the provision of a strategic national highway or a requirement to underpin national facilities such as the Fusion Centre, as UKAEA. Maximising the benefits of the adjacent railway station and introducing a transport plan similar to that at Milton Park, with frequent bus services and car share arrangements, would meet UKAEA's requirements.

14.41. The Planning Committee's reasons for refusal remain largely extant. The Scheme cannot be described as viable and whether it can be delivered remains highly questionable. It also fails to consider the wider impact on Abingdon or of the frequent diversions from the A34 or of HGVs using the route as a cut-through to the M4.

14.42. The traffic data underpinning the application is based on out-of-date input and fails to prove that the Scheme will reduce traffic congestion in the area. Congestion will return to current levels by 2034 and will result in a 42% increase in travel by private car. The data also makes insufficient allowance for the induced traffic the Scheme will attract, particularly through the villages. Claudia Currie's view on induced traffic and the impact of Covid and Brexit is questionable.[436]

14.43. Attention should also focus on the impact of the new road on Abingdon and Golden Balls roundabout and the exacerbation of further congestion in Sutton Courtenay and Appleford. No data has been produced to prove the OCC contention that the HIF1 scheme would reduce congestion, especially as it makes no allowance for induced traffic attracted by the proposed roundabout on the Appleford Road.

14.44. The concern is that the network will quickly return to gridlock, at a cost of £296m. That cannot be described as '*future-proofing local infrastructure provision*' and fails to meet the assurances the SoS is

[436] Ms Currie POE paragraph 6.23 & 6.28

seeking. The current HIF1 scheme will not meet the traffic requirements of further housing and expansion of facilities in the Science Vale without considerable improvement and a new application which would definitively reduce congestion and make better use of alternative modes of transport.

14.45. Weight should be given to the housing targets within the emerging JLP. In addition, the County Council's shift from '*Predict and Provide*' to '*Decide and Provide'* in its LTCP, means that the rejection of the current application will allow it to shift from the outdated methodology and modelling to a modern approach.

14.46. The SoS in reaching his decision should be made aware of the limited financial provision and the lack of sufficient allowance for inflation. The construction risks, as highlighted by Mr Russell Harman, add hugely to concerns about the deliverability of the current Scheme.

14.47. Given the current flaws and without drastic improvements amounting to a new forward-looking integrated transport system, I contend that the proposal will not be consistent with the Government and Local Plans the SoS is seeking assurance on.

Dr Caroline Baird (INQ 9)

14.48. This is the second time in 3 years that South Oxfordshire has been disenfranchised. In 2020 Robert Jenrick directed SODC to adopt the highly controversial Local Plan. The call-in of the rejected HIF-1 application is a further assault on local democracy. OCC's Planning & Regulation Committee, rejected the application by 7 against, 2 for. This reflected the public opinion from the consultations. There are five rural parishes opposing the Scheme. Culham and our rural community will be severely harmed by the plan

14.49. The present HIF1 route is outside any safeguarded land in the version of SODC Local Plan submitted for examination. There was no public exhibition for this new and now preferred route. The route was added to the LP35 as a Modification.

14.50. Two new roundabouts on the A415, will cause additional queuing in close proximity to the Europa School and its playing fields. The proposed new roads and their induced demand will bring extra traffic from Didcot and the A34 directly to the A415 very close to the school.

14.51. The HIF Road, either side of the viaduct across the River Thames (itself a truly ugly design) will undoubtedly need to be built at a raised level. This will bring excessive, and continuous, traffic noise to the Culham village and, at night, light pollution to the village and nature's creatures.

14.52. Culham is situated in a loop of the river. Floods in January and February 2024 saw the 9ft deep lock overflowing, and floodplains bringing water very close to dwellings. If more Green Belt land is taken for HIF1 we will lose vital areas of absorption and the flood risk will be increased.

14.53. OCC's traffic modelling ignores Abingdon and fails to consider how the town's bridges and one-way system could hope to cope with the increased traffic.

14.54. In 2017 we were sold the dream: A '*Garden Line'*: '*a green ribbon connecting Didcot Town Centre with Culham Science Centre'* with cycle and footpaths; and in the longer term '*an extended zone'* for driverless pods or overhead transport system. In its place, HIF: busy roads and consequent noise and emissions, and a cycle lane. A perfectly horrid walk or cycle.

14.55. In addition to crossing the river and the Thames National Path, the route of HIF1 crosses or encompasses 13 footpaths and bridleways. Ruining these rural paths, with some permanent closures and diversions to these Public rights of way, would cut off vital links between our villages.

14.56. The world has changed dramatically since HIF1 was first considered. There is a climate emergency, there are more sustainable ways to move people from point to point and there is a very prevalent Work from Home culture, including c. 50% of employees at CSC. The huge destruction of the landscape is unnecessary. The site area of 155 hectares is predominantly agricultural land including wetland habitat. There will be a loss of hedgerows and trees and the loss of yet more Green Belt in Culham.

14.57. The LVIA state that there would be an "*inevitable and significant harmful effect*", only reduced after 15 years, but would "*remain significant adverse in the most part*."[437]

14.58. Alternative options and in particular ones that encourage a modal shift away from cars have not been properly explored. We firmly believe that public money could be put to better use. It is possible to deliver the employment and housing needs of the District and reduce the peak hour bottlenecks without HIF1.

Daniel Scharf (INQ 11)

14.59. Transport is a major contributor to terrestrial carbon emissions. Neither carbon reduction budgets nor targets will be achieved at the current rate of reduction. The planning application for the road prepared and supported by planning officers, and the fact that this Inquiry is taking place, is evidence of denial that that there will have to be a paradigm shift if carbon reduction budgets and targets are to be met.

14.60. I am expecting the SoS (with the assistance of Inquiry Inspector and expert evidence) to fully account for the embedded or upfront carbon as well as the operational carbon. In doing so the weight given to both the certainty and timing of the upfront carbon would be greater than the weight given to any alleged and disputed savings of operational carbon in the medium and longer term.

[437] ES Chapter 8 Paragraph 200

14.61. The absence of the road would not interfere with the delivery of houses consistent with legally agreed carbon reduction budgets (eg see up-to-date position of Homes England). All the new housing areas have existing road access and there are main line railway stations at Didcot and Culham which played a part in site allocation.

14.62. The road would not be consistent with the growth of the green economy that would instead be boosted by the need to support all the low and zero carbon alternatives to mass road transport.

14.63. The extent to which the road is consistent with the development plan for the area must, under S38(6), be balanced with how the plan addresses and deals with the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions in line with more recently legally agreed budgets and targets.

Graham Paul Smith (INQ 13)

14.64. Oxford Cycling Network were surprised and very concerned by the designs for junctions and roundabouts. For cycling to be a mode of choice it needs something very different than a trunk road scheme with cycling added around the edges.

14.65. HIF1 is roads before housing. Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2 should be the starting points, but are entirely ignored. To minimise the need to use the car, and to maximise walking, cycling and public transport what is necessary is a compact urban form with a main street running through. The development model, proposed here, a Distributor Road with pods of residential, is guaranteed to maximise the use of the car. This does not align with NPPF 114(c) referring to the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code, with note 48 –"*policies and decisions should not make use of or reflect the former Design Bulletin 32 which was withdrawn in 2007*".

14.66. Mr Smith's submission includes diagrams setting out the differences between previous and up-to-date guidance.

Peter Kirby (INQ14)

14.67. Mr Kirby is a retired physicist and previously worked on fusion at the CSC. He stated that the UKAEA has given a wholly unrealistic description of fusion research. Mr Kirby believes that this description is intended to promote its property development and force the construction of a £300 million road system in the Oxfordshire countryside.

14.68. The proposed development is based on the premise that roads are always beneficial. That view is increasingly unacceptable. The HIF-1 road may be desired by the UKAEA for its own gain, but it will be a blight on the area. HIF1 will lead to damage to the environment, to human health and to people's lives. It may also put the local Councils at financial risk.

14.69. His view is that any new road would attract more traffic until the road is saturated. That will increase traffic congestion and 'rat-runs' through the

surrounding villages. He stated that any claim that only a major new road can bring environmental benefits (such as pedestrian paths, cycle ways and buses) is merely 'green washing' and a weakness in transport strategy.

14.70. Mr Kirby provided a summary of fusion energy works and its requirements. He stated that a commercial fusion reactor is absolutely impossible in the near term. He highlighted issues with materials, radioactivity, and repairs. He concluded that rhetoric about unlikely, very long-term future developments should not be allowed to influence present-day planning decisions.

14.71. Mr Kirby contends that if the UKAEA wishes to expand its property portfolio (and to create a centre of employment), the UKAEA can simply expand its operation at Harwell. There it owns about 300 hectares of land, conveniently next to an existing road system (dual carriageway A34) and close to an existing main-line railway station (Didcot Parkway).

Robin Tucker on behalf of Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel INQ22)

14.72. The HIF1 modelling is not robust, its wider impacts are not considered, the alternatives have not been considered, and it goes against OCC's policies and some of the reasons the Planning Committee rejected it last year.

14.73. The modelling is based on out-of-date projections made before the pandemic that do not take into account the need to decarbonise the transport system, and that reducing vehicle-kilometres travelled is an essential component to this. Reducing vehicle-kilometres travelled is part of both OCC's LTCP and England's Economic Heartland's Transport Strategy.

14.74. Abingdon would see greatly increased traffic and has not been considered at all. On many days there is a queue over 800m long waiting to get into the town.

14.75. As with any road expansion project HIF1 will only solve congestion temporarily on the section where capacity is expanded, while encouraging more traffic into other pinch points such as Abingdon and the A34.

14.76. The A4074 is notoriously dangerous for high-speed crash deaths. HIF1 will deliver more traffic onto the A4074 and that will result in more casualties unless there are treatments against this.

14.77. Every village that connects onto the HIF1 scheme will see an increase in traffic. More traffic means more pollution and more road casualties. Nowhere is there an analysis of HIF1 on traffic levels, pollution and casualties in villages such as Steventon, Appleford, Culham, the Hendreds and Nuneham Courtenay.

14.78. Alternative, more sustainable options have not been considered. Several possible options were discarded at stages before any credible assessment was possible. Only the more roads and more cars option was pursued.

14.79. The LTCP has targets in three areas:

- Reduce car trips by 1 in 4 by 2030 and a further 1 in 3 by 2040.
- Reducing road fatalities and life changing injuries by 50% and then to zero.
- Reduce the climate impact of the transport network to net zero by 2040.

14.80. OCC already has a good strategy to reduce traffic congestion. In Oxford, the first phase of a Zero Emissions Zone has been rolled out, Parking restrictions and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods encourage people to walk and cycle rather than drive on a local basis. These measures will reduce central Oxford traffic by 40%.

14.81. HIF1 would cause the County to fail to deliver its targets for car journey reduction, road casualty reduction and decarbonisation, even before considering the environmental harm it would cause. Conversely, if HIF1 is implemented, when the LTCP targets are delivered, reducing traffic by half, it will leave HIF1 as a great underused white elephant across our countryside.

Professor Malcolm Airs OBE (INQ 66)

14.82. Professor Airs was the Conservation Officer for SODCl from its inception in1974 until 1991. He was responsible for the designation of the Nuneham Courtenay conservation area and for negotiating the unique legal agreement for the protection of the historic village.

14.83. The original design of the village with the cottages aligned close to both sides of the road and built off shallow foundations means that the listed buildings are particularly vulnerable to any increase in traffic on the A4074. There has been no traffic survey to assess the implications of HIF1 on the fragile character of such an important heritage asset. Despite the assertions to the contrary, HIF1 will result in a greatly increased volume of traffic to the Golden Balls junction. A significant proportion of that traffic will choose to head north towards Oxford through the village street.

14.84. Its tranquil character is already compromised by the current level of traffic and there must be a real concern that the stability of the listed buildings will be threatened by the vibrations caused by heavy goods vehicles passing in close proximity to their fabric. In the absence of any strategy for the mitigation of such a damaging consequence, it must be concluded that the tests set out in Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 cannot be met.

Mr Mockler and the trustees of the Milton Manor settled Estate (OBJ 15.19 & CD N.04)

14.85. Mr Mockler and the trustees strongly support the conclusions of the NPCJC. It is unnecessary to double the width of the existing A4130 to make it into a dual carriageway. There is already a perfectly good road for the transportation of building materials and such like. There is also an innate contradiction in the plan to build a single carriageway for the vast majority of the proposed HIF1 scheme but the dual carriageway for the first stages of the Scheme. The logical conclusion is surely either to build a dual carriageway the whole of the way or a single carriage way the whole way. It makes no sense at all to create a further bottleneck where the proposed dual carriage way suddenly has to funnel into a single carriageway.

14.86. The purpose of dualling the A4130 is to relieve the congestion at rush hour between the Milton interchange roundabout and the centre of Didcot. But this has nothing to do with facilitating house building and will simply induce car drivers to use their cars more and more. Any increased capacity will fill up and result in further jams within a year or two.

14.87. The Scheme has not properly considered alternatives to the HIF scheme there is only a few pages in the original planning application devoted to alternatives, all of which were rejected. Secondly there is the financial question which the NPCJC deals with. The costs of building the road have rocketed and will continue to rocket.

14.88. Mr Mockler's land at New Farm (Milton Fields) has been allocated for 800 houses. We have produced an innovative, sustainable and exemplary masterplan for a car free development. As shown within our submitted documents, the Milton Fields masterplan and Stantec transport proposals the road widening would have a disastrous effect on the whole Milton Fields proposal. It would reduce the land available, increase noise and pollution, add to the volume of runoff water, and even more obviously it would be contrary to the whole idea of a car free development. It would have a most damaging effect on the whole scheme.

14.89. Mr Mockler is particularly concerned that OCC may decide that they have spent so much money on HIF1 that they are unable to abandon it.

14.90. The LCTP encourages horse riding however Cow Lane is a bridlepath and it would become dangerous following the implementation of the Scheme. CSC employs 45,000 people. Why does it need any additional homes? JET has been decommissioned, and the use of the site will change over time. Nottingham will become the centre for fusion energy in the UK. The world centre for fusion energy has moved to France and CSC is now no more than a property development company. The science bridge which is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

14.91. The CarLina project uses automatic elevated platforms fitted with passenger pods or skips that could be an alternative to the proposed

road. This solution could also provide a link between Culham and Harwell. There has been no study of alternative solutions such as flying vertical take-off taxis that would not require any road space. Milton Fields is an exemplary site as a car free development and this could be an example for the Didcot area. Vertical take-off taxis would avoid the need to widen the road. The proposed roundabouts are for the benefit of warehouses.

Councillor Simon Peacock Western Valley Parish Council (CD.N.11)

14.92. Western Valley Parish Council was formed a year ago and therefore did not comment at the time of the application. It supports the proposal. It is an important project due to the number of houses to be delivered within Valley Park. The existing road infrastructure is woeful and needs to be improved for the benefit of future and current residents. The Parish Council fully supports this application and asks that the Scheme be approved.

14.93. When the A34 is blocked other roads become congested and the proposal would also assist with this. Western Valley Parish Council agrees with the planning officer's recommendations and considers HIF1 to be as eco-friendly as possible. At the present time public transport is unreliable and the trains do not link to places people wish to travel to.

14.94. The infrastructure will assist in delivering the housing and employment growth identified in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Parts 1 and 2. Without this proposed infrastructure planned new growth is unlikely to be delivered.

14.95. Planning applications have already been made for several parcels of land within the Valley Park development. The dualling of the A4130 will have a material difference to travelling times to the residents of this new development as well as the already occupied Great Western Park, which exits on to this road. It is well documented that the A4130 is already at capacity, it cannot accept any further travellers without increasing wait times and delays, yet additional developments with associated vehicles are being approved.

14.96. The Scheme has very good cycle infrastructure, we would ask that should this application be approved, the connectivity to the current cycle infrastructure be improved.

14.97. There is a certain amount of guilt associated with using traditional combustion engines. However, there are no sizable supermarkets within our Parish. As such, people must travel to get their shopping and other items.

14.98. As a Parish Council we acknowledge this scheme will have an environmental impact, however we believe that the benefits to the community of implementing this scheme, outweigh the potential environmental harm.

David Pryor Didcot First (INQ16)

14.99. In the 1974 boundary changes Didcot found itself located on the edge of two district councils. Our rail links have always helped us be equally influenced by Reading and London.

14.100. Didcot has been a focus for housing growth for over half a century. It is now a major town with a population heading to over 50K. Both South and Vale have consistently chosen the Didcot area for substantial parts of it housing development. The community assets and infrastructure investment typically lag 30 years behind. That is why this significant investment in infrastructure is so critical for its residents.

14.101. Didcot sits at the heart of a science and technology powerhouse, referred to as Science Vale. The campuses of Culham, Harwell and Milton Park are home to innovation that brings potential for massive economic growth, across a breadth of science and technology. This is not only of vital importance to Didcot and Oxfordshire but can play a key part in our national economy for generations to come. The campuses need to recruit the best brains from around the world to come and work there. They are competing with Silicon Valley and Boston Massachusetts.

14.102. For the UK to achieve the full economic benefit it is absolutely key that the town of Didcot is seen as a positive and pleasant place to live. Didcot must have good infrastructure to allow these workers to travel to work, whether it is by foot, bicycle, bus, car or rail.

14.103. The HIF proposal addresses three key 'roadblocks' that have been severe problems for many years and simply will not cope with the further housing expansion needed to accommodate the demand by growth in jobs.

14.104. Along the 40 mile stretch of the River Thames from Caversham to Oxford there have only been two new river crossings built in the last 160 Years, in 1993 at the Wallingford bypass, and in 1962 at Donnington. The Clifton Hampden, Shillingford and Culham bridges were constructed between 1807 and 1867. Abingdon Bridge dates from 1416.

14.105. The routes to Culham and Clifton Hampden are both increasingly prone to closure because of flooding, leaving CSC workers living south of the Thames massive detours for days or weeks at a time. The proposed infrastructure has been required for decades. Without it, Didcot will have calamitous travel problems and this in turn will have a major impact on the UK being a world leader in the essentially environmental revolution and the green economy.

Councillor Sally Povolotsky County Councillor for Hendreds and Harwell division (INQ 26)

14.106. I strongly support the HIF1 scheme. It is needed to address the housing and infrastructure needs of my local communities. Congestion

post pandemic on the OCC maintained A and B roads as well as the A34, is the worst I have ever seen it.

14.107. The HIF1 scheme plays a pivotal role in releasing the much-needed infrastructure for the new residents but also my future residents in developments like Valley Park. The percentage of affordable housing on both the Great Western Park development and the soon to be constructed Valley Park fills a gap around social and affordable housing which is such a significant concern in our area. However affordable and social housing schemes are no good if residents and future residents cannot access their places of employment and the harsh reality is that currently the public transport and active travel provision locally is not, and will not, be utilised to its fullest potential as the preference is to navigate the congested road conditions in your own vehicle.

14.108. We cannot get patronage of buses / trains until they are a viable alternative to the private motor vehicle. I have heard the arguments about how HIF1 will not promote sustainable and eco-friendly travel habits. I strongly dispute these claims which are based on some academic desk study. Human behaviour is simple, if the alternative is not quicker then why would anyone change a habit?

14.109. We have the congestion now and children are missing vital education due to the aging and unfit bus network to the Europa School. Due to the recent flooding in January 2024, some days the children spent 2 hours on the bus each way due to the closure at Culham Bridge. I have firsthand experience of this as a mother of a student attending the school.

14.110. Since I was elected, I have sat on the HIF1 Cabinet Advisory Group. When we were taken on a tour of the site to look at impacts and alleviation only Cllr Enright (who was the cabinet lead at the time) and myself turned up. Until you see how all the Schemes now and future scheme lock into HIF1 and the wider benefits, do I feel a judgement cannot be made. It is clear is that unlocking HIF1 does lead to a benefit, including for my future residents in the Valley Park scheme. HIF1 also leads to a connected Science Vale, which currently doesn't exist and as such puts pressures on other congested parts of the network.

14.111. The expansion of Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham, which have a fantastic and positive economic impact on the County and locality but also for UK plc R&D. I hear what other Councillors have said and the scholastic approaches of academic papers and theories, but my experience is daily, my residents' experiences are daily and my division is growing. There is no doubt about '*what's next*' should HIF1 be approved which is my recommendation, and around how we discourage private single occupancy use of motor vehicles, but you can't even start to do that when the current inconvenience for public transport and the sporadic network of active travel isn't a viable or attractive alternative.

14.112. In short, our transport system cannot cope and our highways infrastructure is at capacity, the real time issue is traffic and congestion and we have thousands of homes being delivered off the A4130. The impact on daily lives is exhausting, the alternatives aren't viable in terms of efficiency or cost (bus or train), as its quicker to drive. There will be no modal shift if we have congestion.

Councillor Ian Snowden Oxfordshire County Council

14.113. Supports the comments made by Councillor Povolotsky. The proposed road would not encourage increased car use. The country lanes are unsuitable for cyclists. The proposal would also allow for the improvement of bus services

14.114. The proposal is overwhelmingly supported by Didcot residents and the funding is in place for the Scheme.

Councillor David Rouane Leader South Oxfordshire District Council (INQ 32)

14.115. HIF1 is a fundamental part of our Local Plan. Without HIF1 it was made clear that our Local Plan would fail because so many housing sites, planned and existing, need this road in order to be viable settlements.

14.116. Many people, me included, thought that the Local Plan that we inherited from the previous administration, had too many houses being built too quickly. The Local Plan has been adopted and it is our job now to deliver it. The HIF1 road is key to that.

14.117. People in Culham don't want 3,000+ houses being built on the edge of their village, I understand that, and people opposing that development may think that by stopping this road, they can stop the development. That is not a valid objection to the road, it is an objection to the Plan which is an argument which has been settled. For people in Didcot that argument is too late, we already have the houses. Within my ward alone there are 2,000 houses under construction on the Didcot NorthEast site. 750 houses have planning permission on the Ladygrove East site. The site called 'Land East of Ladygrove' is a speculative development with around 100 houses. So you have around 3,000 houses added onto an already existing housing estate. For us, it is not a case of unlocking new houses, it is about servicing the houses that already exist.

14.118. My ward is sandwiched between the river to the north and a railway line, which acts like a river, to the south. HIF provides connections replacing old and narrow bridges over both of these, allowing people to get to work or play. We are effectively an island sandwiched between these two rivers.

14.119. I am proud to be Leader of one of the greenest councils in the country. I have heard that rather than a road we need a cycle lane, a bus lane or a tramline, but these don't glide effortlessly across fields, and they don't fly over rivers, they need a road on which to be anchored.

14.120. Country lanes that link Didcot and Culham are beautiful on a summer's day but are a nightmare in the rush hour, especially in the wet and dark of winter. The bridges at Culham and Clifton Hamden are single laned and traffic light controlled. There is nothing green about sitting in a queue of traffic waiting to be able to cross and nothing scarier than cycling on these bridges knowing there is a queue of angry motorists behind you. This proposed road provides segregated cycleways and an alternative route that takes you directly from where people live in Didcot to where people work either in Culham or towards Oxford.

14.121. The third group of objections are about the detail. People will say the route is not quite right or the bridge does not look good. The design of the 'Science Bridge' has been described as 'brutalist' but, in the end, you have to pick a route and a design, and you have to build it.

14.122. People are angry about a road going through their village, they are angry about houses being built alongside their village, but people in Didcot are angry too. They are angry because they have had lots of developments foisted on them without the infrastructure to go with it. People move to Didcot because it is close to their work whether at Milton Park, Culham or Harwell, thinking they would be able to get there quite easily. Some think they will be able to cycle but then change their minds when they look at the roads and revert back to their car. For example, when you cycle towards Milton Park you have to cross a dangerous 5-spur roundabout. Any cycle route is only as good as the worst part of it.

14.123. Didcot needs an alternative route out of town, for work or shopping or leisure. At the moment, those routes are all crowded, dirty and dangerous, and backing up all the way to the town centre. This road provides that alternative route for those travelling west towards the A34 or north towards Culham and Oxford for the hard-pressed residents of Didcot.

Jonathon Alcantra Culham Bus Club (INQ 27)

14.124. The Culham Bus Club organises transport for Europa School in conjunction with OCC. Our combined bus routes transport 500 pupils daily to six schools: Europa School (Culham), John Mason School (Abingdon), Larkmead School (Abingdon), Fitzharrys School (Abingdon), Didcot Girls School (Didcot) and St Birinus School (Didcot). (A map of the routes is provided at INQ 27).

14.125. The school buses enable parents to work full-time, and also reduces traffic on the roads for the school run. The main risk to successful school bus operation is the enormous amounts of traffic now on the roads that the buses need to use, and especially the pinch points around the Thames crossings. Four of our routes are dependent on the one-lane bridge between Sutton Courtenay and Culham, while one other depends upon the one-lane bridge at Clifton Hampden.

14.126. Because of population increase due to housebuilding, the morning traffic has increased dramatically since the start of these routes in 2018. This has led to a substantial increase in the size of the queues to the bridges, especially in Sutton Courtenay. The result of this has been the pushing back of the route start earlier and earlier, impacting the time pupils have to sleep.

14.127. Bus 8 leaves 13 minutes earlier than when we started in 2018, on Bus 12 it is 6 minutes earlier (8 minutes earlier than 2020), on Bus 5 it is 17 minutes earlier, and on Bus 6, 14 minutes earlier than in 2018. This is entirely due to the bridge traffic in Sutton Courtenay. (Covid traffic reduction allowed for a relaxation of the time for Bus 12 in 2020, but this evaporated by 2022.)

14.128. The Europa School has a wide catchment covering the southern part of Oxfordshire. For those families living in Wantage, Grove, Harwell, Drayton, Steventon, Chilton, Milton, Didcot, Sutton Courtenay there are only two ways to cross the Thames to get to Culham. One either enters Abingdon from the south or west and drives through central Abingdon, which is very congested every morning, or one takes the bridge at Sutton Courtenay. The Drayton Road into Abingdon is so heavily congested in the mornings that it can take 30 minutes to an hour to traverse it (a distance of only 1 mile from bottom to top). Most drivers from the south seem to opt for Sutton Courtenay bridge, which can be reached either via Drayton, Milton, or Appleford. Due to the lack of other options, drivers queue for 15-30 minutes at the one lane bridge in Sutton Courtenay, where lights allow for alternating traffic.

14.129. If there is any regional traffic incident, for example a road closure in Abingdon, or a problem on the A34, the queues can grow to the size where the delays can be as long as one hour. When the bridge closes, as in the recent floods, the diversion route through Abingdon took more than two hours, making hundreds of pupils late for school and missing hours of their education.

14.130. The new bypass and bridge would solve the problem in a stroke. Because it is a two-lane bridge, there won't be any queuing to wait for a traffic light for alternating traffic to cross the bridge. Traffic will instead flow across the Thames in both directions. A modern bridge is also less likely to close due to flooding.

14.131. The new bypass should produce flowing traffic between the Milton Interchange and the A415 in Culham that bypasses Sutton Courtenay, Milton and Appleford. The queues in Sutton Courtenay should disappear, as nobody will need to queue beyond those people who continue to use the old bridge (for example: some of the school buses). The section of the bypass marked D on the map, which bypasses Clifton Hampden, will also help with queues that develop at the Clifton Hampden lights in the afternoons. These slow down the school buses that head eastbound and northeast bound from the schools.

14.132. We already have increasing traffic and increasing queues, caused by the new housing across the area. The main cause of the current queues is the eighteenth century one-lane bridge. This one-lane bridge prevents traffic from flowing between the Milton Interchange and the A415 in Culham. Removing this blockage will enable traffic to flow and resolve the current huge queues. The bridge will not attract new traffic: we already have large numbers of cars needing to cross the Thames northbound, and the traffic will simply move from a one lane bridge with alternating traffic to a proper two-lane bridge with flowing traffic.

14.133. The same logic as outlined above applies to all motorists from the area served by Milton Interchange or Didcot who need to cross the Thames towards the A415 in Culham. There is a need for a modern two-lane bridge across the Thames, and there is also a need for a bypass that can take drivers from Milton Interchange to that bridge, without the need to drive through the slow and narrow villages of Milton, Sutton Courtenay and Appleford.

Sue Scane (INQ 12)

14.134. I am the Deputy Chair of Didcot First, as well as being the Chair of Didcot Volunteer Drivers.

14.135. The Scheme must go ahead. The residents of Didcot accepted huge growth in housing, but it was in the light of promised new infrastructure. That infrastructure is still outstanding, and the traffic congestion around the town is now completely unacceptable.

14.136. There are still more houses being built in NE Ladygrove. The start of another 4.5 thousand houses in Valley Park is expected imminently. It's all very well people saying these people need to use public transport, or cycle or walk – I'm sure some of them will – but many will use cars, and the current road network has already reached capacity.

14.137. Secondly, some people will say they aren't opposed to the Scheme, but it isn't the right route. This is a completely flawed argument, as a massive amount of work has gone into the investigations of numerous route options, and whilst some other lines on a map may look preferrable, there were always (often unseen) issues which precluded them from being practical. Examples of this are old landfill sites or scheduled ancient monuments. I am convinced that if it isn't this scheme, now, then there will never be the opportunity to get this route delivered, and to deliver it is essential.

14.138. For me there are a number of things which are particularly important about this route for the people of Didcot. The improvement in the linkage to the A34, and via the Science Bridge reducing the through traffic, which would no longer need to go as far into the town. The most important thing is the construction of the new road leading to a new bridge. The current bridges, at Culham and Clifton Hampden were not

built to handle cars, let alone the volume of cars they have today. Both are at sites which flood, which is becoming an increasing problem.

14.139. In addition, the routes from Didcot to Oxford (without using the A34) mean going through the villages, with their chicanes, and other traffic calming measures, as well as along narrow country roads. A new purpose-built road, with proper provision for cyclists, will be far safer for everyone.

14.140. Didcot Volunteer Drivers take members of the community to medical appointments, both within the town, but also to the Oxford Hospitals. This new road scheme is vital for them. The delays and hold ups, caused by having to go through the villages of Sutton Courtenay, Long Wittenham and Cliffton Hampden are time consuming and make for very unreliable journey times. The increase in journey times and mileage when the bridges are closed, for repairs – they are both ancient – or for flooding, adds to these journey times.

14.141. A return trip via Clifton Hampden to the John Radcliffe Hospital is 34 miles; it rises to 44 miles via Shillingford bridge, but that means delays going through the centre of Wallingford; or to 52 miles via the Wallingford by-pass. The use of the A34 is shorter than the Shillingford/Wallingford alternatives at 38 miles, but the risk of severe traffic delays is much greater, and the A34 has been closed itself due to flooding only this last week. Whilst it may only be a few miles each way, it is significant, and adds up both in cost and time to our often elderly clients.

14.142. For many in the villages a new road and bridge will reduce their current traffic flows. That would certainly be the case for parts of Appleford, and Clifton Hampden and for Long Wittenham. However, those who benefit rarely voice their opinions.

14.143. In fact, I believe that we are only here today because the original Planning Committee in July 2023 didn't accept all the evidence which was provided to it. People like myself who support the schemeScheme didn't attend as we didn't think there was a problem with the planning, and I believe the Committee was unduly influenced by the voices against the schemeScheme at that meeting. We need to ensure that the few who are vocal are not taking away the advantages for the silent majority.

14.144. Much has already been said about the economic development of the area, the national significance of Harwell and Culham, the need to be able to attract and retain people in the area; and their need to be able to travel both to work, and around the area.

14.145. I accept that any road scheme is expensive, and acknowledge it will have some impact on the environment, I genuinely believe that to fulfil the promises made when the house growth was introduced to Didcot over a decade ago, that this Scheme must go ahead.

Ryan Padgett (INQ 31)

14.146. I support the HIF1 proposals that are critical for the future of our community. Furthermore I would like to speak to represent the position of the silent majority, whose views are too often absent from these discussions, and to seek to represent those of the economically active who are so dependent on the HIF proposal, and many of whom are not fortunate enough to be able to attend a mid-week Inquiry, or even do not know that an Inquiry of such criticality for the future of our community is taking place.

14.147. I moved to Didcot in 2019 to be able to commute to London via train. And I like many others who have moved here, am shocked at how poor the local connectivity is.

14.148. In line with the national trends, the population of Didcot, and other parts of South Oxfordshire has exploded, however, there have been minimal corresponding upgrades to the infrastructure. Changes are already long overdue. Housing is coming. People speak of a climate emergency, but the housing crisis is already having far more immediate and profound effect on the lives of young people. There is already a national shortfall of four million homes, which only escalates in severity year on year and makes the dream of home ownership for young people ever more distant.

14.149. The housing which must come so that people have places to live must be supported by the underlying infrastructure. The proposed HIF1 is therefore a necessity for our community. It would serve as a vital enabling link connecting various neighbourhoods, providing efficient transportation options, and enhancing accessibility to essential amenities like schools, hospitals, and businesses. Unsurprisingly therefore, this project has garnered widespread support from residents, community organizations, and businesses, and would undoubtedly contribute to the local economy by fostering better transportation connections and attracting potential investors and developers.

14.150. It has enjoyed the support of OCC, SODC and Didcot Town Council, where only recently a motion of unanimous support for HIF1 was passed by those present at the meeting. This is not surprising given the HIF1 plan also provides the foundations to enable the future growth and prosperity of our town. There is almost 800,000 square feet of unmet demand for laboratory space in Oxfordshire and the plan provides the opportunity for Didcot to contribute to closing that demand gap, bringing well paid and fulfilling jobs to our town, but this can only be done if the underlying infrastructure is in place.

14.151. Genuine concerns regarding environmental impact, cost, and other factors must be taken into consideration. However comprehensive plans for environmental mitigation and sustainability are already in place, and I suspect that there are no mitigations that would satisfy the demands of the objectors. I and many others care passionately about the

environment and sustainability. But we also must be able to travel to work. I personally walk or use bus or the train, wherever possible. But, for some journeys the car is essential.

14.152. I ask If not this, then what? If not now, then when? We will not accept the impoverishment of our community to indulge the selfish self-interest of a vocal minority. I would therefore urge the Inquiry to support the delivery of the HIF proposals in full.

15. Written Representations

15.1. In this section I report firstly on the responses from individual organisations. Where the consultee has submitted more than one submission I have relied on the most recent submission, I then summarise the issues raised by interested parties that did not appear at the Inquiry.

15.2. A total of 201 third party representations were received from local residents, interested organisations, district councillors, and developers/landowners associated with land affected by the development or development sites near to it during the first round of consultation. 195 of these comments expressed concern or stated objection to the proposal and 6 were written in support. During the second round of consultation on amendments to the proposals and additional environmental information, 168 comments were received. 165 of these objected to or raised concerns about the proposals and 3 were written in support. During the third round of consultation, 25 representations were received, 24 of which stated objections to or concerns about the proposal and 1 was written in support. There were also 30 Representations in relation to the called in application.[438]

Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP SoS Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (Now Shadow SoS) N18

15.3. The department's interest in this decision relates to the potential impact on the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy in Oxfordshire. This centre is run by the UKAEA and is central to the UK's ambition to lead the world in the development of commercially viable fusion energy.

15.4. Fusion energy could be a low carbon, continuous, effectively unlimited power source and provide the UK with an unrivalled economic opportunity given our global lead in the most promising technologies in the field. Fusion could also play a major future role as part of global net zero efforts, as part of a low carbon energy mix. In the last Spending Review the Government invested over £700m in UKAEA's cutting-edge research programmes, facilities, and industrial support programmes. This investment is designed to grow the capability of the UK fusion industry and make the UK the primary global hub for fusion innovation. In September this year we announced a boost to that investment of up to £650m to 2027.

15.5. The campus is home to the Joint European Torus - the world's largest operational fusion machine. CSC is a hub for private sector innovation and R&D companies that want to benefit from the unique expertise and mix of skills and capabilities at Culham. It complements the campus at Harwell and contributes to the economic wellbeing of the local community. A London Economics report published in 2020 showed that total economic impact of UKAEA to the UK economy is estimated to be

[438] CD N 1-30

between £1.3 billion and £1.4 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA), for the period 2009/10 to 2018/19.

15.6. Any decision regarding new transport links in and around Abingdon is likely to have considerable implications for the ability of the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy to grow and capitalise on its globally unique position.

Historic England *(CD E.22, CD E.53, CD.E.88)*

15.7. Historic England does not object to this scheme on heritage grounds. Whilst there are some specific concerns, as outlined below, it considers that the ES provides a reasonable assessment of significance of heritage assets and the predicted impacts on them, whether adverse or beneficial. It concludes that the application is therefore broadly compliant with paragraph 200 of the NPPF 2021.

Clifton Hampden

15.8. The illumination of the road at night time in proximity to Clifton Hampden Conservation Area would, when first constructed, appear likely to result in some negative change to the dark, rural setting that helps reinforce the rural character of the settlement.

15.9. The new road may increase and change noise levels to the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area, which could affect the experience of the rural settlement qualities of the village which are a feature of the Conservation Area's character. However, we expect the road would also reduce the amount of traffic that travels directly to Clifton Hampden, which will reduce the noise this generates, and when combined with the reduction in vehicles movements would improve the experience of the Conservation Area.

Nuneham Courtenay

15.10. Lighting from the road may be seen from within the Grade I Nuneham Courtenay landscape albeit to a limited degree. The landscaping proposals indicate that, in proximity to these assets, woodland planting to the east, south and north of the new road and connecting roads would provide screening to limit light spill.

Settlement Site North of Thames

15.11. The new Thames crossing and road would be near to the scheduled monument known as Settlement Site North of Thames, but would not change the evidential value of the monument.[439] The monument would be affected by light pollution and noise (near constant as opposed to intermittent railway noise that exists at present) from the road, visibility of the road / bridge and infrastructure. It would mean that the site would feel enclosed on two sides by modern features - the impact is cumulative

[439] HA1006345, A117 in the Environmental Statement.

to that of the railway line. The ES assesses the impact magnitude as minor adverse on an asset of high significance. The significance of the effect on the monument is assessed as slight, permanent and *'not significant'*. Historic England consider the change to the setting is such that the significance of effect is moderate, and not slight. This is less than substantial harm for the purposes of the NPPF, but a higher level of harm than that assessed by the ES.

Undesignated Heritage Assets

15.12. The ES should have included the results of the archaeological trench evaluations. These evaluations have been completed and reported on. Conclusions in the ES that the effect on undesignated archaeological remains will be '*slight adverse not significant'* are premature until the evaluation results are considered. In revising the ES to include the evaluation results, consideration should also be given to whether any undesignated archaeological remains are of equivalent (national) significance to designated remains. The NPPF requires such assets to be assessed as if they were designated.

Natural England *(CD E.28, CD E.51)*

15.13. The closest designated site to the proposals would be the Little Wittenham SAC & SSSI, which is ~3.1km to the southeast of the northern end of the works at Clifton Hampden. Given the designation at this site is for Great Crested Newts there is unlikely to be any fragmentation caused by the proposed Scheme so impacts can be ruled out.

15.14. It is welcomed, within the BNG Assessment that there has been an assessment made using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and that there is a full understanding and commitment made to ensuring a minimum 10% gain. The variety of recommendations made within the above document with regard to in particular the linear (river) habitat units would be welcomed in order to ensure that 10% is reached for that particular metric as this is rightly identified as lacking currently.

15.15. The Scheme is 1.8km outside the North Wessex Downs AONB, therefore the input of the AONB board should be sought.[440]

Environment Agency *(CD E.63, CD E.64, CD E.65)*

15.16. In the third round of consultation, the Environment Agency confirmed that it no longer had any objections to the application subject to conditions.

OCC Archaeology *(CD E.15, CD E.59,CD E 92)*

15.17. An Addendum to the ES has demonstrated that archaeological deposits survive along the proposed route of the new road. These deposits are not of sufficient significance to require physical preservation but will be

[440] Now the Wessex Downs National Landscape

impacted by the Scheme. These archaeological features will therefore require further archaeological mitigation to fully record them in advance of this impact. This can be secured through an appropriately worded condition.

Oxford Preservation Trust *(CD E.74)*

15.18. The Scheme was based on the assumption that the Oxford to Cambridge arc would happen and deliver significant growth within Oxfordshire. However, in 2021 plans for a major new road to link the two cities were dropped. At a local level OCC published its climate action framework in 2020 in which they committed to a net zero future for Oxfordshire and with the ambitious aim of operating at net zero carbon by 2030.

15.19. With all this in mind we question whether it is necessary to create a new road network across the existing open countryside. If the ambitious targets are to be met, plans for the new road and bridge building across the County should be stopped. The extensive housebuilding programmes taking place offer many opportunities to provide green alternatives, to design more environmentally friendly residential areas and to offer alternative modes of transport for residents. We urge the OCC to rethink this road and bridge building programme and find a greener way.

OCC Public Health *(CD E.24 ,CD E.28)*

15.20. At the time of the scoping review for the EIA in 2020, there was no requirement for a separate Health Impact Assessment to be undertaken of major infrastructure schemes. However, the relevant chapters in the ES provide sufficient information for an assessment of the impacts of the Scheme, positive, negative and neutral, on health and wellbeing.

15.21. Due to the scale of the Scheme and the presence of public exposure receptors close to the Site boundary, e.g., residential properties and education facilities, there is potential for adverse air quality effects during the construction of the Scheme in relation to construction dust and plant equipment.

15.22. There will remain a number of properties which will experience a significant adverse impact from this scheme but will not benefit from the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975.

15.23. Given that the population health assessment has identified that a number of sensitive receptors will be adversely impacted during the construction phase, it is essential that effective monitoring is undertaken to ensure that the Noise and Vibration Management Plan (NVMP) and the Dust Management Plan are fully implemented and adhered to in order to mitigate potential impacts.

Oxford Bus Company *(CD N.07)*

15.24. The Oxford Bus Company runs the vast majority of the scheduled public bus mileage within both Local Authority Districts within which the

proposals lie. In direct support of the ongoing delivery of large-scale plan-led growth, it has grown these operations substantially since 2019.

15.25. This has led to substantial increases in the share of local journeys undertaken by bus in the Didcot, Milton Park and Harwell area. These notable and encouraging results have been achieved by ongoing collaboration and partnership between us and the County Council, as well as major local stakeholders at Milton Park and Harwell Campus, and the University of Oxford.

15.26. We wish to lodge our formal support for the proposals under consideration. The delivery of the proposals is crucial to directly supporting the efficient and reliable operation of existing services. These are necessary to achieve broad national and local policy transport policy goals. The existing deficiencies in the highway network gives rise to chronic congestion and delay and has a particularly serious impact on bus service delivery.

15.27. There is a statutory duty under the Transport Act 1985 to run on time and reliably. To meet these standards the Bus Company must account for the bulk of reasonably foreseeable delays. This means on many occasions, to avoid buses running early, they must "*wait time*" when traffic is more freely flowing than usual. This is a substantial drain on operating efficiency and resources, and also greatly exasperates the travelling public, reducing the attractiveness and potential of bus services in the area.

15.28. Multiple services use part or all the A4130 west of Didcot. This reflects the role of the road to facilitate local as well as longer distance flows. The link passes recent residential development north of Great Western Park, and also runs directly past the initial phases at Valley Park, where construction has now begun on primary infrastructure. The lack of bus stops on the eastern end of the A4130 partly reflects the nature of the road and the weight of traffic currently on it.

15.29. The main public transport movement is east to west across the A4130 between Basil Hill Road and Milton Road. This is the busiest bus corridor in South Oxfordshire by a considerable margin, being the main link between Didcot station and town centre, and Milton Park. Services operate as frequently as every 5 minutes in each direction across the junction at peak time. There is no credible means of providing relief to this area without the scheme. The A4130 rail overbridge and the proximity of the roundabouts to it at either end create obvious multiple serious engineering constraints to an on-line improvement. The Science Bridge will also directly service the bulk of the former power station site, which represents one of the largest employment development sites in the SOLP.

15.30. There is an absence of regular links across the Thames towards Culham and South Oxford, including the Oxford Eastern Arc from Didcot and committed developments to the north. Without such links, major

development north of Didcot, at Culham, and potentially at Berinsfield cannot be anything other than greatly more car-dependent than they ought to be. Chronic congestion on the approaches to the existing river crossings make it all but impossible to implement such links.

15.31. There is a policy aspiration in SOLP for a regular bus service from the Chalgrove New Town to Didcot. This would be difficult to deliver without relief to the A415 and a suitable river crossing and direct link to Didcot.

15.32. The new bus routes that the Scheme would facilitate would provide crucial connectivity from large parts of Oxford including the key knowledge and research sites mentioned above, to other parts of the Science Vale UK cluster, helping to facilitate the agglomeration benefits of the cluster in a radically more sustainable manner.

15.33. The services involved are relatively long distance and by their nature, need to be reasonably competitive against driving a private vehicle both on frequency and journey time. To be economic to provide, buses must be able to make consistent swift progress. The scheme proposals would facilitate this.

15.34. The scheme is a key component of an integrated multi-modal transport strategy. This will create credible new options for cycling as well as public transport, both for existing and new residents, where few if any currently exist. Substantial growth that has taken place in the town and wider area including in many villages. Much of this, especially in the Vale of White Horse immediately north-west and west of Didcot, came forward outside the plan-led system, in the period prior to the adoption of the Local Plans.

15.35. In the event that the SOLP fails, as a direct consequence of the failure to deliver the proposals, then housing need remains. Without the ability to progress with the SOLP, a serious lacuna opens up, that is highly likely to trigger a resumption of speculative applications. The tendency will therefore be towards wider dispersed development across rural South Oxfordshire, north/east of the Thames and beyond the Oxfordshire Green Belt. They will be in smaller, much less sustainable settlements, relatively distant from all employment and services – and in particular the research, knowledge and business growth in Science Vale UK. Therefore, far from supporting a reduction in car dependency, refusing the Scheme is actually likely to materially reinforce it, as it is likely to drive an extreme dispersal of development, at least in the short-medium term.

Sport England *(CD E.12, CD E.49, CD E.83)*

15.36. Sport England has concerns regarding the loss of former playing field at the RWE site to the north of Didcot. Sport England considers that the application conflicts with Objective *Protect* in that it results in the loss of a full-size football pitch. In light of the above and the lack of evidence of any exceptional circumstances Sport England objects to the application.

15.37. Sport England will reconsider its position if the playing field lost was to be replaced elsewhere which would meet its planning policy exception E4. The proposed development would remove the ability for the football pitch to be brought back into use.

Long Wittenham Parish Council (CD E.10)

15.38. Long Wittenham Parish Council supports this planning application. This new link will ease traffic flows passing through Long Wittenham as the expansion of Ladygrove north-east of Didcot gathers pace.

15.39. The road must include a link from the new Ladygrove expansion on the Didcot- CSC road. The Parish Council is also in favour of other infrastructure improvements proposed by the County Council to help ease traffic volumes and congestion in the District. A bypass for Clifton Hampden will be necessary to cater for the increased flow of vehicles from new development areas at Didcot and Culham seeking a route to Oxford and to the M40 and beyond. Also of immense value will be the proposed dualling of the A4130 Didcot to Milton Interchange Road leading to the A34. The Parish Council believes improvements to the A4130 will help cater for extra traffic from the expanded Ladygrove and Great Western housing developments. A Science Bridge will also bring benefits to the area. The Parish Council also believes that to improve safety and capacity it is essential that there is significant investment in improvements to the A34 trunk road.

15.40. There are concerns about the visual impact of the railway sidings bridge at Appleford, and the Parish Council consider that the design could be improved.

Councillor Sarah James Hendreds Ward *(CD N.15)*

15.41. The flaws in the ES are so fundamental as to leave it invalid, so that it would be unlawful and open to challenge to grant planning permission for this application. The ES does not consider at all that the new road might lead to an increase in traffic levels due to induced demand. Roads across my ward are already regularly congested during peak times. Induced traffic growth from HIF1 will put more strain on these but the ES does not look at this.

15.42. Options apart from new roads, or the do nothing scenario were discarded early on in a first sift of the ES.

15.43. The ES also fails in its consideration of climate change impacts. The bulk of construction emissions are blithely noted as embedded. The materials are embedded in the road, the emissions are out in the atmosphere. Operational carbon emissions are apparently cut by HIF1, by reducing congestion elsewhere in the road network, but of course that only works if there is no induced traffic demand.

15.44. The most recent report of the CCC "*Progress in Reducing Emissions 2023 report to Parliament*" made a recommendation: R2023-148 - Conduct a

systematic review of current and future road-building projects to assess their consistency with the Government's environmental goals. This should ensure that decisions are only taken forward if they meaningfully support cost-effective delivery of Net Zero and climate adaptation.

Drayton St Leonard Parish Council *(CD N.13)*

15.45. Drayton St Leonard Parish Council would like to record its support for the HIF1 Planning Application and urges the Planning Inspector to approve the scheme.

15.46. The local roads in the area of Burcot, Clifton Hampden, Warborough, Drayton St Leonard and Stadhampton, and in particular the single track road between Berinsfield and Stadhampton which passes through the small village of Drayton St Leonard, are already significantly congested during peak times and are used throughout the day as 'rat runs' for traffic transiting to the east of Oxford between the M40, Didcot and Abingdon.

15.47. The addition of 15,000 new homes in Didcot and the plans to develop 1,700 new homes in Berinsfield will put significant further pressure on the local road infrastructure. The HIF1 improvements need to be adopted to take the existing and substantial future traffic demand that these homes will create. We have no objection to the proposed homes, but the road infrastructure to support these developments must be enabled. Not to do so would be more damaging to the environment, putting significant additional traffic pressure on existing congested roads.

15.48. We believe that the HIF1 proposals represent a well thought through series of improvements to the local road infrastructure and we are in full support of the plans, as indeed are many other local communities in the area.

Oxford Roads Action Alliance *(CD N.26)*

15.49. The scheme is incompatible with carbon reduction targets and climate policies. It will undermine national legally binding national targets for CO_2 reduction. No carbon reconciliation statement has been provided.

15.50. The development contradicts Oxfordshire LTCP. Relief from traffic congestion (as claimed) will at best be very short lived and in the long-term congestion will be worse. There is no plan to achieve modal shift of sufficient magnitude to other forms of travel. Alternative infrastructure has not been properly assessed in the Officer Reports.

15.51. Traffic modelling is based on old pre-covid data and is inadequate. It fails to take into account induced traffic or the impact of traffic diverting from the A34 at rush hour or for road accidents. The impact of traffic on Abingdon and Golden Balls has been scoped out of the analysis. The assessment fails to follow Web Tag guidance and is in conflict with NPPF & PPGs. This development is therefore premature given the emerging JLP.

15.52. There is no Health Impact Statement which conflicts with LTCP. OCC acknowledge harm to 19 dwellings (understated) in Appleford due to noise at SOAEL levels.

15.53. Negative impact on landscape - Appleford flyover (50 ft), significant tree canopy loss at Clifton Hampden and riparian environment at the Thames crossing (Sutton Courtenay/ Appleford / Culham). There is no HRA. The loss of land (300 acres) and tree canopy (289 tree features, major hedgerow removal and loss of 2 woodlands) along with impact on the river environment at the Thames crossing will negatively impact biodiversity near the road.

15.54. Escalating costs and agreed fixed fundings from Homes England mean this road cannot be delivered in full (all sections) and claimed benefits (which we dispute) cannot be achieved.

FCC Owners of landfill site at Sutton Courtenay *(CD N.16)*

15.55. FCC formally withdrew its objection to the application. This was because of FCC's continuing support for the principle of the proposed development and due to the additional assurances provided to FCC by the Council. This was contingent upon its concerns being addressed through the detailed design stage of the scheme.

15.56. Should the SoS determine that planning permission should be granted, FCC would highlight the importance of a number of the conditions contained in annex 1 to the Officer's Report to Committee. In particular a condition requiring a revised restoration and aftercare schemes for the Didcot to Culham River Crossing section of the Scheme.

15.57. In addition conditions are necessary for a detailed surface water drainage scheme and a CEMP.

Gardens Trust *(CD E.09,CD E.85)*

15.58. The Gardens Trust did not comment on the Scheme but stated that this did not signify approval or disapproval of the proposals.

Mays Properties *(CD L.08 & POE)*

15.59. Although Mays properties submitted a POE to the Inquiry they did not appear, but their objection to the planning application was not withdrawn.

15.60. The objection was concerned with securing access to their land for a scheme that was under consideration by the LPA. Agreement was reached with OCC. Although the objection to the Orders was withdrawn, the objection to the planning application remains.

CPRE South Oxfordshire & CPRE Vale of White Horse (Combined Response)

15.61. This Scheme would include development on the Green Belt, which CPRE consider to be non-compliant with NPPF and Local Plan policy and are strongly opposed to any further erosion of the Green Belt. The road, cutting across green field sites around Didcot, Appleford, Sutton Courtney and Clifton Hampden will ruin the landscape and settings for these communities and all those who enjoy access to this countryside. The Scheme will also have a detrimental impact on local wildlife.

15.62. This scheme is out-of-date specifically in relation to the councils own transport and climate commitments. The carbon and environmental costs of the proposals would be significant and have been downplayed in the assessments.

15.63. Concerns raised by others are supported, including those which identify shortcomings in the ES and a failure to assess all the impacted localities, to consider viable alternatives and the lack of appropriate mitigation measures. CPRE also supports NPCJC's conclusions on deficiencies in the ES on Air Quality.

15.64. Non-Compliance with the LTCP which seeks to develop a zero-carbon transport system which prioritises walking and cycling and reduces car journeys. The impact on communities beyond the immediate scheme needs greater consideration. The local communities that would be impacted by the HIF1 scheme do not support the proposals and do not want their places to look and feel as if they are being formed around a road-building agenda.

15.65. The largest and most pressing existing problem, traffic congestion in Didcot, will not be solved by this scheme.

BBOWT

15.66. The proposed development raises serious concerns about the negative impact on breeding and wintering birds across the whole scheme including disturbance during construction and operation and accidental mortality from collision with vehicles.

15.67. The proposed development raises serious concerns about the negative impact on the final scheme proposed for the Hanson restoration area at Bridge Farm Quarry including the impact on priority habitat, impact on birds and other wildlife and impact on the nature reserve for the visiting public.

Jacqueline Mason (Fullamoor Farm) *(CD N.03)*

15.68. The site lies immediately to the north of Fullamoor Farm, a Grade II listed building. The proposed development would change the setting of the listed building and thereby cause harm to a designated heritage asset.

15.69. Whilst the impact of the new road will, ostensibly, be to take the main body of traffic further away from the proposed works are designed to facilitate a significant increase in traffic numbers.

15.70. Since the property is a listed building this impact cannot be easily mitigated for example through modern double glazing. No conditions are proposed which would secure the ongoing monitoring of the noise impacts of the proposed development and allow for further mitigations to be required should they be necessary in the future. Questions have been raised about the accuracy of the Noise Reports and in the circumstances, future monitoring would be wholly appropriate.

15.71. The plan showing proposed landscaping and planting outside of Fullamoor Farmhouse has been amended a number of times and without some clarity on which plan is to be secured as part of the permission it is impossible to have comfort that these concerns have been appropriately considered by the Council.

15.72. The downgrading of the existing A415 to an accessway provides opportunity for uncontrolled parking and the ability for gypsies and travellers to use it as a layby for periods of time. It is not sufficient to dismiss these concerns as a part of a balancing exercise of public good against private harm.

15.73. Whilst the retention of a footpath and cycle way will ostensibly link Clifton Hampden with the railway station, it is clear that the proposals do not represent any improvement. In particular there is no proposed safe crossing point between the downgraded A415 and Culham Station. Any suggestion that people should travel up north to the new road and turn left to the Station ignores all rational desire lines. Safe sustainable transport links require a controlled crossing at the roundabout.

Other Written Representations

15.74. I provide a summary of the representations made to the LPA at the time of the application. To avoid unnecessary repetition I have not included matters on which the Rule 6 parties provided evidence to the Inquiry, since these are covered in detail elsewhere in this Report.

- The development, and the associated loss of trees, open space, and biodiversity assets is contrary to the climate emergency
- The development will result in more HGVs travelling through rural villages
- The proposed river crossing will be a physical barrier between the communities of Appleford and Sutton Courtenay, impacting on community links
- The proposal would increase traffic through Sutton Courtenay and Drayton
- The proposed roundabout at the entrance to CSC is too large, unnecessarily complicated, and over-engineered

- The Culham Science Centre roundabout would be at an elevated level and would impact on the privacy of properties near Culham Station.
- The Clifton Hampden Bypass would destroy trees, woodland and fields causing harm to wildlife
- The development would have cumulative effects due to recent and planned housing and employment growth in the area
- The Clifton Hampden Conservation Area would be harmed when it should be protected from development.
- The Clifton Hampden Bypass would be too close to houses and gardens
- Traffic congestion will not be eased but would be moved from one place to another
- The Clifton Hampden Bypass would affect people using footpaths and enjoying the local area for recreation
- There has been insufficient consultation with the local community. Community views have not been taken into account.
- The proposal will destroy the peace and tranquillity of the countryside
- Concern that the development would increase flooding
- There are too many documents in the planning application to be able to fully understand the application
- The proposal would be harmful to many different protected and rare species
- Property values will be reduced
- The Scheme represents a fundamental change to the historical landscape character
- The development is an Oxford-Cambridge Expressway being delivered by stealth
- The Scheme would result in the loss of much needed agricultural land
- The development would be an arterial link between the A34 and M40 and bring large amounts of commercial and HGV traffic through local villages.
- The cost-benefit-analysis does not stack up.
- The construction period would cause immense disruption and prevent residents from accessing work and services
- The development would cause severe harm to the Culham Science Centre
- Nursery through noise and vibration and no mitigation has been proposed.
- The mature trees at the entrance to the Culham Science Centre should be retained.
- The Clifton Hampden Bypass is located as far away from the village as possible, but there should be an island to enable pedestrians to cross the road
- Traffic management measures in villages (e.g. Sutton Courtenay) should be delivered alongside the plans
- The impacts on rights of way are not clear

- A safe cycling route from Abingdon to Culham Science Centre, and ideally on to Berensfield, should be an integral part of the Scheme
- The parallel crossings and 'default to green for cycling' signals are supported.
- Well-placed and frequent zebra/parallel crossings for pedestrians also look to have been achieved
- Pedestrian/cyclist crossings on roundabouts need to be designed to ensure safety and priority of movement
- The cycle path along the A415 should be extended into Abingdon.
- The delivery of the development will need to respect other planning permissions in the area, for example the Roadside Services consent on land to the south of the proposed Backhill Roundabout.
- It is not clear what the impact of the development would be on the settlement of the restored '90-acre field' site
- There is a risk of fly-tipping, overflow parking, unauthorised encampments and antisocial behaviour on the part of the A415 that would be closed, adjacent to Fullamoor properties.
- The existing pedestrian traffic island on the A415, to the east of the Culham No.1 site is proposed for removal. This should be replaced to enable residents to walk/cycle to Culham Railway Station without having to take a circuitous route.
- It is not clear what the planned timetable is for the construction of the development.
- The development would have an adverse noise impact on the Premier Inn
- Hotel near Milton Interchange and no mitigation has been proposed.
- The assessment of the impact of the development on the Grade II Listed Fullamoor Farmhouse is insufficient. The Council has a statutory duty to protect heritage assets as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- The development will result in increased traffic, and therefore traffic noise, to properties in close proximity to the A415.
- The introduction of lighting in the vicinity along the route of the proposed
- Clifton Hampden Bypass will change the character of the area and have impacts for local residents and wildlife.
- The loss of trees has not been appropriately mitigated.
- It is not clear if the permitted use of the Didcot A Power Station site has been taken into account in the baseline junction capacity assessment
- The infrastructure is desperately needed to reduce travel times between Didcot and Culham, including the river crossing through Appleford
- The existing infrastructure has no resilience to issues and therefore there is frequent and very bad congestion
- The dualling of the A4130 is needed to support the Valley Park development

- The development will provide opportunities for people to walk and cycle which are not there at the moment
- The poor quality of the infrastructure at present harms the economy and quality of life.
- The baseline landscape around Appleford is a train line and quarry, it is not an area of outstanding natural beauty
- A few residents in Appleford would be affected but most Oxfordshire residents would benefit
- The development would reduce pressure on the A34
- The proposal provides improved infrastructure to enable active travel and provide sustainable links to new housing developments and employment at Milton Park
- Additional cycle and pedestrian links to surrounding areas, including Oxford, are needed to make any meaningful difference in movement patterns.

16. Conditions

16.1. A list of suggested conditions formed part of the SoCG. In addition, a list of suggested conditions agreed between OCC and the LPA was circulated to the parties prior to the Inquiry for comment. The District Councils' comments were added to the conditions template document (CD Q.2 & CD Q.3). Mr Tamplin commented by letter (CD Q.4). I circulated a note and comments on the conditions prior to the roundtable discussion on conditions (CD Q.5.1 & CD Q 5.2).[441]

16.2. Prior to the Inquiry Mr Tamplin commented on the suggested conditions proposed by the LPA.[442] His view at that time was that many of the suggested conditions failed one or more tests of the NPPF and NPPG. In particular he was concerned that the purpose of conditions Nos 25 and 36 (now recommended conditions 24 and 35) were unlawful, because they seek to circumvent the requirements of the EIA Regulations 2017. The purpose of the Carbon Management Plan is to support carbon reductions, by quantifying emissions, setting targets, monitoring and reporting on emissions. The submitted evidence on carbon emissions is discussed below and more specifically within Mr Lansburgh's evidence. Mr Tamplin also contended that due to the number of pre-commencement conditions the application must be deficient in its present form, and therefore should not be granted planning permission. During the roundtable session Mr Tamplin said that some of his concerns had been allayed in the light of the comments I circulated and responses to them. I therefore have not reported the concerns he raised in full, but they are at CD Q.4.

16.3. The conditions were discussed at the Inquiry on a without prejudice basis. These were subsequently amended and largely agreed between the applicant and the LPA in the light of the discussions at the Inquiry. The final version submitted by the applicant and the LPA is at CD Q.12. I have considered the suggested conditions against the relevant advice given in paragraphs 55 and 56 of the Framework and the guidance contained in the section on 'Use of Planning Conditions' in PPG. The recommended conditions are at Appendix C together with the reasons for the conditions.

16.4. The recommended pre-commencement conditions are limited to the BNG assessment (condition 13), compensatory flood storage (condition 20) and a bus Priority Scheme (condition 36). These all relate to scheme wide matters, and the recommended conditions are acceptable to the applicant. and I am satisfied that the details sought are required prior to the commencement of development. Recommended conditions 33 and 34 concern noise mitigation and monitoring at Appleford. These were drafted such that the details sought were required prior to the commencement of development. I have amended them to require the information to be submitted prior to the commencement of the Didcot to

[441] I also requested that the numbering of the conditions reverted to that used within the SoCG (CD Q.5.3)
[442] CD Q.0

Culham river crossing section of development. This would allow the applicant flexibility in terms of the phasing of development and would ensure that the details sought by the conditions are provided prior to the commencement of any work in the vicinity of Appleford.

16.5. At the Inquiry Mr Tamplin on behalf of POETS proposed an additional condition requiring the establishment of a Joint Liaison Committee to monitor the implementation of the approved development. He subsequently amended the wording of the condition.[443] The applicant and the LPA commented on the suggested condition, and I have taken all of these views into account.[444]

16.6. The condition would require the applicant to establish a Joint Liaison Committee, comprising the local Parish and Town Councils, the applicant and the District Councils to monitor the implementation and initial operation of the Scheme for a duration agreed by the Committee. He suggested that this would possibly be for a period of five years. The committee would receive written reports from the Applicant in response to concerns submitted by any member of the Committee. The minutes of the committee would be submitted to the LPA for information. The reason given for the condition is to protect the amenity of residents within the suggested parishes.

16.7. Recommended Condition 3 requires the submission of a comprehensive CEMP. Amongst other matters in relation to construction it requires: "*Details of roles and responsibilities of those carrying out the construction, and details of the communication strategy with local residents, landowners, community groups, businesses and others that may be affected during the construction process."* It also includes details of construction hours and how complaints can be made.

I therefore find the additional suggested condition to be unnecessary in the light of the measures within the CEMP and other conditions. Should the SoS disagree, the wording and reasoning for Mr Tamplin's condition is included at Appendix D.

16.8. RWE is a statutory objector to the Orders. At the time the Orders inquiry closed they had not yet reached an agreement with OCC (as the acquiring authority. The applicant included provision in condition 3 (the CEMP) to address the concerns raised by RWE. RWE suggested some revisions to the condition. notwithstanding this RWE was clear that the condition did not fully address its concerns. It is intended that these matters will be the subject of an agreement between RWE and the applicant, but that was not completed at the close of the Orders Inquiry. RWE's submission in relation to the CEMP is at CD Q.12. The applicant's view on this matter within its closing submissions to the Orders Inquiry.[445]

[443] CD Q.10
[444] CD Q.11
[445] O-INQ 19 paragraphs 189-191

16.9. I find the suggested amendment to the second bullet point provides clarity in terms of access and I have included it within Condition 3. The additional suggested bullet point in relation to the standard of the temporary access has the potential to be overly prescriptive, and the matters within it would be embraced by the second bullet point. I have therefore not included the suggested addition.

17. Inspector Conclusions

17.1. The issues the SoS wishes to be informed are set out at paragraph 1.3 above. In order to conclude on these matters it is necessary to firstly assess the proposal against local and national planning policy. In my pre-Inquiry note I set out my view as to the main considerations in relation to this Inquiry. This took account of the issues considered by the LPA, as well as those raised by the Rule 6 parties, other interested parties and other Statutory considerations, including heritage matters and BNG.[446]

17.2. On the basis of the evidence submitted to the Inquiry, I consider that some matters no longer represent main considerations and I therefore address these under other matters.

17.3. The main considerations in respect of this application are:

- The need for and benefits of the Scheme
- Whether the transport modelling on which the proposal is based is robust and takes account of any significant traffic impacts in the wider area
- Whether the proposal would make acceptable provision for sustainable travel, including walking and cycling and accord with the LTCP
- Consideration of alternatives
- The effect of the proposal on climate change and carbon emissions
- Whether the effect of the proposal on noise would be acceptable
- Whether the effect of the proposal on air quality would be acceptable
- Whether the effect of the proposal on health would be acceptable
- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape, including any loss of trees and/or hedges
- Whether the proposed Science Bridge would deliver the high-quality design sought by the Framework and development plan policies
- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt, and if so, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the Scheme.
- The effect of the proposal on the setting of and the significance of heritage assets
- Other matters, including the benefits of the Scheme and the consequences of refusing planning permission for HIF1
- Adequacy of the Environmental Statement
- The overall planning balance.

17.4. In terms of the structure of these conclusions, I shall consider each of the above issues in turn, with the exception of the overall planning balance. I shall then consider the adequacy of the ES and conclude on

[446] CD R.3

the overall planning balance. I then conclude on the matters the SoS wished to be informed about.

The Need for and Highway Benefits of the Scheme

17.5. The need for the Scheme derives from the existing and planned housing and employment growth in Science Vale which straddles the boundaries of Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council. It includes the three centres for science and technology at Harwell Campus, CSC and Milton Park, as well as the larger settlements of Didcot, Grove and Wantage. Evidence provided to the SOLP examination showed that the Scheme would directly underpin at least 19,319 homes within SODC and VWHDC areas.

17.6. The need is acknowledged by the LPA, the two District Councils (SODC and VoWHDC) and UKAEA. There is also support for the Scheme from the Parish Councils of Western Valley, Hendreds and Harwell, Long Wittenham, Drayton St Leonards, Didcot Town Council, Oxford Bus Company, Culham Bus Club, Didcot Volunteer Drivers, Didcot First, the Shadow SoS for Energy Security and Net Zero and other interested Parties. [8.54,8.55,8.58,9.3–9.31,10.4, 10.16-10.20,14.97 - 14.103,14.107-14.110, 14.111,14.117, 14.118 -14.119, 14.120 14.128,14.131–14.138,14.140–14.150,14.151–14.157,15.3 – 15.6,15.24–15.35,15.38,15.40,15.45- 15.48]

Policy

17.7. The housing and employment growth within the development plans for the area (SOLP, VWH LPP1 and VWH LPP2) depend on the Scheme. Modelling was undertaken through the various Evaluation of Transport Impacts studies produced between 2014 and 2020 for all three Local Plans and assessed through the examination process for the plans.[447] The Local Plans expressly support all four components of the Scheme and safeguard land for them.

17.8. The Science Vale is identified as a strategic focus for growth in both Districts. There are a number of very large individual allocations: 3,500 homes and a net increase of 7.3ha of employment land at Land adjacent to Culham Science Centre (SOLP Policy STRAT9); 1,700 homes and 5ha of additional employment land at Land at Berinsfield Garden Village (SOLP Policy STRAT10i); 2,030 homes at North-East Didcot (SOLP Policy H2); 2,587 homes at Great Western Park (SOLP Policy H2); 2,550 homes at Valley Park (with "*the capacity to deliver considerably more"* beyond 2031) and 800 at North-West Valley Park (VWH LPP1 Core Policy 15). [6.7,8.42,8.43,8.49, 8.50 9.3,9.4,9.8,9.9]

17.9. The strategic allocations within the SOLP allocate land for 10,199 new homes within the current plan period. This is close to half the minimum

[447] CD G.1.1-G.!.7, CD G.2.9 – CD G.2.11

housing requirement for the entire plan period,[448] and a third of the total housing supply identified in the plan.[449]

17.10. The SOLP explicitly supports the delivery of the HIF1 scheme, in Policy TRANS 1b. The land needed to deliver the road is safeguarded in Policy TRANS 3 and appendix 5. The relevant strategic housing policies emphasise the need for HIF1. The SOLP provides strong support for the principle of the development. [9.2]

17.11. The HIF1 scheme was included as part of the planned highway mitigation for planned housing and employment growth in the traffic modelling supporting the soundness of the SOLP. Policies STRAT 3, STRAT 9 and STRAT 10i expressly link the delivery of the houses to the provision of planned infrastructure, including HIF1. Policy TRANS 1b supports the delivery of strategic infrastructure, including a new Thames crossing between Culham and Didcot, whilst Policy TRANS 3 safeguards land for strategic Transport schemes. [9.7]

17.12. The CSC was removed from the Green Belt by Policies STRAT6 and STRAT8 of the SOLP for the express purpose of allowing the strategic redevelopment of the CSC. It is also supported by national policy in the UK's Fusion Strategy. It is the second largest single employment allocation in the SOLP. The adjacent land – amounting to some 217 hectares – is allocated for c. 3,500 homes by Policy STRAT9 and is the largest single housing allocation in the SOLP. [10.13]

17.13. The Framework Masterplan for the CSC is aligned with Policy STRAT8 (as well as the other relevant policies of the SOLP). There is alignment between the Framework Masterplan and the UK's Fusion Strategy. The Government has committed funding of c. £184 million via the Fusion Foundations Programme to support the transformation of the CSC, as envisaged in the Framework Masterplan. [10.15]

17.14. As confirmed by the Inspector's Report, in selecting locations for employment growth, SODC has sought to link the housing growth in Didcot and the business growth needs of Science Vale to enable the creation of sustainable communities and to provide new residents with the chance to work locally. This approach was found sound. [6.10,9.10, 11.92]

17.15. The Inspector who examined the SOLP concluded that the HIF1 scheme was necessary to support the new housing planned around Didcot and at Culham and Berinsfield. His report identifies that the HIF1 scheme "*must be delivered prior to any significant development at Culham*", that it "*needs to be in place prior to the commencement of development at Berinsfield*" and that it "*will enable infrastructure to support key development sites in and around Didcot*". Thus, the transport evidence

[448] CD G.01 p.28 policy STRAT2 sets a minimum requirement of 23,550
[449] CD G.01 p.88 table 4c identifies a total supply of 30,056

base supporting the planned growth in SODC's area is based on the assumption that HIF1 will come forward. [6.10,9.5]

17.16. Policy CP17 of the VWH LLP1 identifies the HIF1 components necessary to mitigate growth across the Science Vale area, whilst policies CP18 and CP18a safeguard the necessary land. In addition, Policy CP33 seeks to mitigate and minimise the impacts of new development on the strategic and local road network. [8.17,8.18,8.19,8.20]

17.17. Some objectors contend that the Local Plans are out-of-date or that the urgent need to address climate change means that the weight to be afforded to them should be reduced. As explained by Ms Lambert on behalf of VWH, even if some policies attract reduced weight, the development plan remains the starting point for the consideration of this application. I return to this matter later in the Report. [6.12,8.5]

17.18. Mr Tamplin, on behalf of POETS stated that in the case of the SOLP, the imposition of housing targets by the Government and the directions by the Government requiring the plan to reflect Government policy on housing has had a detrimental effect on the local planning process. He is also of the view that there is no cogent reason for the level of housing and employment growth proposed in the SOLP. A similar view was expressed by Mr Turnbull on behalf of East Hendred Parish Council, who advocated a lower growth rate. [13.44]

17.19. The Local Plans have been through the Local Plan examination process and were found sound and form part of the statutory development plan for the area. It is not the purpose of this Inquiry to reassess the housing and employment needs identified within the Local Plans. The plans support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes as set out at paragraph 60 of the NPPF and the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development as required by paragraph 85. [6.10]

17.20. Mr Turnbull alleged that Policy CP17 of LPP1 was out-of-date because it refers to LTP4 as opposed to the more recent LTCP. However, Policy CP17 recognises that highway infrastructure identified in LTP4 which included the HIF1 scheme could change. Although LTP4 has been replaced by LTCP, the latter identifies the components of HIF1 Scheme. Consequently, there is no basis to conclude that Policy CP17 is out-of-date. [8.10,8.11]

17.21. Overall, I conclude that there is substantial policy support for HIF1 in the Local Plans for the area. Moreover, it is an integral component for growth within the Science Vale. In addition to the support for the Scheme within the development plan, there are a number of other relevant policies. These include the LTCP and the DGTDP.

Other Highway Issues addressed by the Scheme

17.22. In addition to accommodating the planned housing and employment growth within the Science Vale, the Scheme is intended to address a number of other issues. These include:
a) The poor existing highway network performance;
b) The under-provision of active travel in the area;
c) Improvements in public transport; and
d) The need for adequate network resilience and safety.

Network Performance

17.23. The considerable housing and employment growth in Didcot and the wider Science Vale area has led to significant traffic growth. A number of witnesses provided evidence of the existing problems on the network and its lack of resilience. Junction capacity assessments using 2020 base traffic flows show that a number of junctions are operating over capacity in either or both the 2020 morning and evening peak hours. The planned employment and housing growth would exacerbate these existing problems. [6.16,9.13,9.14,10.6,11.101,11.107]

17.24. Mr Foxall, on behalf of UKAEA, identified nine junctions near to the CSC which are already operating over capacity, of which four restrict flows over the two existing river crossings located at Clifton Hampden and Culham. UKAEA state that the Scheme is needed to unlock the future development of the CSC and the national benefits that it will deliver. [10.4,10.6, 10.7]

17.25. Mr Sensecall on behalf of UKAEA and CEG (the promoter of the STRAT 9 allocation), confirmed that planning permission for the employment proposal coming forward on the "No. 1 site" is expected to be subject to a Grampian condition limiting development by reference to the HIF1 scheme. He also explained that due to highway capacity constraints that it had been necessary to enter into a s.106 to 'trade' floorspace from an existing outline consent to bring forward reserved matters on a more urgent development. He stated that the CSC cannot expand without the necessary infrastructure, including the Didcot to Culham River Crossing and Clifton Hampden Bypass. [9.12,10.16]

17.26. Due to the severity of these issues proposals for single dwellings have been refused planning permission on highway grounds, with the refusals being upheld at appeal.[450] OCC has subsequently adopted a Development Release Strategy, which allows the delivery of housing, subject to mitigating measures, but that strategy is expressly predicated on the Scheme coming forward[451] and, as explained by Mr Wisdom, "*if the HIF1 Scheme were not to proceed, OCC would need to remove the*

[450] See Mr Wisdom proof para. 4.14, citing the four appeal decisions.
[451] See the Development Release Strategy at Mr Wisdom's Appendix AW2.2.

development release strategy and reconsider its approach to development in the area"[452].[9.15,9.16]

17.27. The levels of existing and future congestion are illustrated by the traffic modelling. When run at full demand in 2034 without the Scheme, the model showed gridlock. To get the model to work it had to be run at 70% of demand with the results then factored up to full demand. The modelling demonstrates that in the absence of the Scheme some junctions would have queues in excess of 600 vehicles long by 2034.[453] [6.18,6.19,6.20,6.24,8.56,8.57]

17.28. Further evidence of the extent of traffic problems was provided by interested parties. Of particular note is the evidence from Mr Alcantra on behalf of the Culham Bus Club. He explained that buses regularly queue for up to 30 minutes at the Culham bridges, and on occasions, when the bridges close the journey can take more than 2 hours. This has resulted in the school buses leaving earlier. The Oxford Bus Company refer to the chronic congestion and delay that arises at present and similarly impacts on bus service delivery. [6.21,14.131,14.132,14.133,14.137, 15.27]

17.29. Ms Scane, Deputy Chair of Didcot First and Chair of Didcot Volunteer drivers, explained how the volunteer drivers taking people to medical appointments have to suffer delays, unreliable journey times, and very significant diversions. Similar evidence was provided by Mr Pryor of Didcot First. [14.145,14.146, 14.108,14.109,14.110]

17.30. NPCJC acknowledge that there is congestion in the morning and evening peaks, but do not consider that the level of congestion justifies the HIF1 Scheme. It states that the fact that OCC withdrew its objection to the housing scheme in Sutton Courtenay is an acknowledgement that the congestion is less acute than claimed.[454] Mr Wisdom, on behalf of OCC stated that the withdrawal of the objection was due to the adoption of the Development Release Strategy and the proposed mitigation, including the financial contributions towards bus services rather than because congestion was no longer considered severe.[455] Moreover, the appeal decision makes clear that there were local concerns regarding congestion on the area's wider highway network, particularly at peak periods in the immediate area of Sutton Courtenay and the Culham/Sutton bridges over the River Thames.[456] [10.7,]

17.31. Mr James, on behalf of NPCJC disputed UKAEA's evidence on highway capacity. However, his views were based on an addendum transport assessment dated 24 November 2021 for a new Research and

[452] Evidence in chief, day 6 (28 February 2024).
[453] As explained at paragraph 5.3.11 of the Transport Assessment (CDA.7). It is also worth noting that this was after the demand reduction had been made for new developments in the future model year (i.e. demand was reduced to 80% of what would otherwise have been the total).
[454] See INQ 36
[455] Mr Wisdom EiC
[456] INQ 36 paragraph 43

Development building at CSC, that was subsequently superseded by a Transport Assessment for the Framework Masterplan. [10.6, 10.8, 10.10]

17.32. The traffic modelling, junction capacity assessments, the evidence from interested parties, including the Oxford Bus Company and the Culham Bus Club, as well as the evidence from UKAEA regarding the need to trade floorspace to bring forward more urgent development clearly indicate that traffic congestion is severe at present, particularly during peak periods and when the existing bridges across the Thames are closed. It is evident that the existing congestion is a constraint on both housing and employment growth in the Science Vale as well as an issue for those working and living in the Science Vale.[11.103,11.104]

17.33. HIF1 would provide more capacity and thus relieve the existing congestion as well as provide capacity for future planned growth. Both existing river crossings use narrow historic bridges, such that traffic is restricted to single lane shuttle working. Moreover, there was compelling evidence from several parties, including NPCJC that the existing bridges, both located within Flood Zone 3, are a particular constraint and have been closed with increasing frequency in recent times. HIF1 would provide an important additional river crossing which would help address the issue of severance between Didcot and the CSC, and more generally between Didcot and areas to the north of the Thames where significant housing growth is planned. The Science Bridge will also help to address severance caused by the railway line. [6.25,9.22, 11.104,14.109,14.110,14.130,14.135,14.145,14.146,15.30]

17.34. NPCJC and others maintain that the Scheme would only provide a short-term solution since in their view, the network would function in much the same way as it does now ten years after it opens. Whilst with the Scheme in 2034, average journey times and speeds are broadly similar to 2024 without the Scheme. However, the 2034 time includes the planned growth across the Science Vale. It would also alleviate congestion at particular pinch points such as the river crossings. As is evident from the traffic modelling, in the absence of the Scheme the network would be at gridlock by 2034. [6.19, 6.20,11.4,11.5]

17.35. Mr Tamplin on behalf of POETS suggested that the Local Plans were inconsistent with paragraph 115 of the NPPF. This states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. Whilst a number of parties suggested that the impacts of the Scheme would be unacceptable at particular locations, including Appleford and Nuneham Courtenay, there was no substantive or technical evidence to indicate that the Scheme would have a severe impact on the highway network. Indeed, the purpose of the Scheme is to address existing severe congestion and the potential for future congestion. I therefore find no conflict with paragraph 115 of the NPPF. [8.14]

Under provision of active travel

17.36. SOLP Policy TRANS 2 seeks to ensure new development is designed to encourage walking and cycling and support sustainable transport improvements. Policy TRANS 5 requires developments to provide safe and convenient routes for cyclists and pedestrians, including links to rights of way and other off-site walking and cycling routes where relevant. [9.23]

17.37. The HIF1 scheme would support these aims through the provision of a segregated walking and cycling route for most of its length. It would provide about 20km of new and/or improved off-carriageway cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. It would also enable wider connectivity to footpaths, bridleways, footways and other cycle networks. This is through direct linkage, but also through connectivity of Didcot and Abingdon LCWIP. [9.24]

17.38. The Scheme, including the Science Bridge is integral to the aims of Didcot Garden Town. By reducing the impact of existing and forecast traffic within the town would contribute to making walking and cycling more attractive and help to realise the network of improvements identified in the adopted Didcot LCWIP.

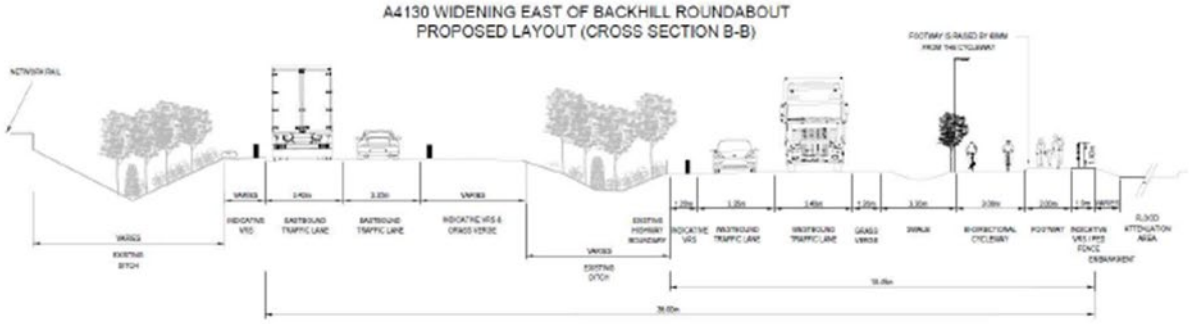
17.39. There is agreement between objectors, supporters an that provision for active travel needs to be improved, particularly in the light of the planned growth. Whilst there is disagreement between the parties as to how this should be achieved.

17.40. Mrs Casey Rerhaye stated that cycle routes have long been planned to support new growth but have not been delivered. She considers that the delivery of these routes and bus services would assist with reducing peak hour congestion. The Scheme would assist with the delivery of the planned cycle routes. [11.93]

17.41. The existing active travel network is fragmented and limited. For example, there is currently no direct cycle route between Didcot and Culham Science Centre. The existing route involves using narrow and congested roads. I viewed the existing route along the A4130. This is shared with pedestrians and is about 2.0 metre in width including the white line buffer. It has minimal separation from the traffic. Councillor Rouane, amongst others provided evidence as to the inadequacies of the existing cycling infrastructure. He drew attention to the difficulties of cycling across the existing bridges due to their narrowness and the consequent delays to motorists. Similar issues arise for pedestrians. [14.126]

Existing Provision at Clifton Hampden Bridge

17.42. The Scheme would provide a 3-metre segregated bi-directional cycleway, a 2-metre segregated footway with a buffer that is approximately 4 metres in width in this location. There would be similar provision throughout the Scheme. The extent of provision at the proposed bridges would be less, in that there would be a single bi-direction cycleway and footpath. Nonetheless when taken together with the buffer there would be 3 metres separating cyclists from traffic, and 6 metres separation for pedestrians.



Section showing width of proposed road and provision for pedestrians and cyclists

17.43. North of the River Thames, a footpath would be provided to connect the eastern side of the new road to the Thames Path. Short sections of footpaths FP3 and FP6 near the Clifton Hampden Bypass will be stopped up and an integral cyclist and pedestrian shared use facility would be provided along the north side of the road. Additionally, two uncontrolled crossings across the bypass would maintain the connectivity of local Public Rights of Way(PROW) and serve users of both FP3 and FP6.

17.44. At present, whilst there are a number of PROW these predominantly serve a recreational function. The extent to which the cycle and footpath network provide a realistic alternative to the use of the private car for everyday journeys is limited both in terms of the routes and also due to the poor quality of a number of the routes. The Scheme will essentially

provide a central walking and cycling route along its length that other projects would be able to connect to. One example of this is the STRAT 9 housing development that aims to provide a fully segregated walking and cycling route from Didcot to Abingdon. In addition, Sir Ian Chapman explained that the modal shift that is a fundamental part of UKAEA's vision for the CSC is dependent on the new walking and cycling provision that is part of the Scheme. The Scheme would also assist with facilitating active travel links from Berinsfield to Culham. [9.27, 9.28,10.20,14.84,14.125]

17.45. It was suggested that the provision for pedestrians and cyclists within the Scheme was piecemeal and unlikely to be attractive to many users, and that the route would be busy and noisy. The proposed cycling and walking network is comprehensive in so far as it relates to the Scheme. The evidence from Mr Chan and Mr Blanchard explains the detailed arrangements proposed along the route, including the route and crossing arrangements for cyclists and pedestrians. The pedestrian and cycling routes will follow the alignment of the carriageway and therefore users will be aware of the noise and volume of traffic, as explained above it would be separated from it, even on the proposed bridges. In some locations, such as the A4130 there would be a generous level of separation with pedestrians walking adjacent to agricultural land and separated from the traffic by the bi-directional cycle lane.

17.46. Whilst the Scheme would not address all active travel journeys within the Science Vale, it forms part of a wider overall strategy and would enable connectivity to existing and planned footpaths, bridleways and cycle networks and forms an integral part of the Didcot LCWIP. Overall, the Scheme would deliver significant benefits in terms of connectivity for active travel as well as providing high quality, safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists. [6.34,8.45.9.24,14.14,14.54]

Improvements in Public Transport

17.47. There are currently only limited north-south bus services operating across the river to the north of Didcot. The existing transport network in and around Didcot will not operate efficiently for any mode of transport without intervention due to the constraints of the bridges. The expected levels of housing and employment growth is likely to add significantly to this issue. The need for improved bus services is recognised by NPCJC.[11.93]

17.48. The journey time and reliability of bus services including the Culham Bus Club, impacts on their attractiveness and commercial viability. Many of the bus routes serving villages, are only viable due to pump-priming from development sites, such as the Hobbyhorse Lane site in Sutton Courtenay.

17.49. The representations from the Oxford Bus Company and Culham Bus Club explain how the current congestion and inadequate infrastructure is a serious barrier to attractive, reliable bus services. UKAEA has already

made contributions towards public transport improvements, but it is concerned that these may not be deliverable. The evidence, including that from the Oxford Bus Company, would suggest that improvements are not deliverable in the absence of the Scheme. This view is shared by VWH [8.45,10.19]

17.50. Through the provision of additional highway capacity, including the Thames crossing, the Scheme will improve journey time reliability and allow the incorporation of bus priority measures. In addition, unlocking development on some of the larger sites such as STRAT 9 and STRAT 10i would help to support improved and more frequent bus services at Culham. [9.29,9.30]

17.51. The contribution of HIF1 to improved bus services was acknowledged by local representatives, the Culham Bus Club and Oxford Bus Company. The latter stated that the chronic congestion and delay that arise at present have a particularly serious impact on bus service delivery. The Scheme would also facilitate the delivery of new bus routes. [14.113,14.116.14.118,14.136,14.136,15.26,15.32]

17.52. There is currently no scope to introduce bus priority measures given the lack of alternatives for the general traffic, particularly crossing the River Thames. The Scheme would include bus priority measures at traffic signals on main roads within Didcot and on routes between Didcot and Harwell, Wantage, Milton, Abingdon and the A34. It would also provide additional capacity for buses.

Network resilience and safety

17.53. The existing historic bridges at Culham and Clifton Hampden are located within flood zone 3 and often need to close. They closed for a week in 2021 and 2024. The Scheme would provide resilience in this respect. By providing an additional river crossing, the HIF1 scheme will also help to improve the resilience of the local transport network. Many witnesses spoke about this issue, and the impact on the network when there is an event such as flooding or an accident or road closure. Even POETs acknowledge the need for an additional river crossing for active travel and public transport. [6.25,9.13,9.14,9.22,9.23,11.104, 12.45,14.109,14.110,14.123,14.125, 14.130-138,14.143 14.146]

17.54. I conclude that there is a clearly identified need for the Scheme. This is supported by the policies within the development plans for the area, as well as the evidence underpinning those plans. As such the delivery of the Scheme would be consistent with the SOLP Policies TRANS1b, TRANS 3, STRAT 3, STRAT 6, STRAT 8, STRAT 9, and STRAT 10, VWH LLP1 Policy CP17, CP18, CP18a and CP33. It would also support a plan led planning system. The Scheme would also deliver a number of highway and other benefits as outlined above, including improving the poor performance of the existing highway, provide for active travel, facilitate improvements in public transport and provide resilience to the highway network. In this regard it would also comply with paragraphs 108 and

109 of the NPPF in that it would focus growth on areas that are, or can be made, sustainable, offer a genuine choice of transport modes, promote walking, cycling and public transport and help to reduce congestion and emissions. Overall I conclude that there is a need for the Scheme and it would deliver significant highway benefits.

Whether the transport modelling on which the proposal is based is robust and takes account of any significant traffic impacts in the wider area

17.55. The reliability of the traffic modelling, including the approach to induced traffic and re-routing underpins many of the objections to the Scheme. The modelling was undertaken using a three-stage process, starting with the strategic OSM, then the Didcot Paramics Microsimulation model, as well as a detailed assessment of specific junctions. Ms Currie, on behalf of the applicant confirmed the robustness of the modelling.[6.34]

17.56. The model was also assessed by the Highway Authority with advice from external consultants during the application process. They confirmed that they were satisfied with the process.[6.34]

17.57. At the time of the PIM the LPA remained concerned about the extent of traffic modelling undertaken by the applicant as well as the applicant's approach to the traffic modelling. The Inspector who conducted the PIM requested that the LPA provide a Technical Note setting out its concerns. Prior to the Inquiry the transport evidence was reviewed by Origin Transport Consultants on behalf of the LPA. On the basis of the information in the Origin Review, and the additional information provided by the applicant in its Technical Note, the LPA concluded that its concerns in relation to the impact of traffic on Abingdon and Didcot and the conflict with the LTCP had been addressed.

17.58. The Origin Report specifically considered:

- Whether the traffic impacts of the Scheme on the Golden Balls Roundabout and on Abingdon should have been assessed; and
- Whether the Scheme has adopted the OCC Decide and Provide approach;

17.59. Notwithstanding the above assessments objectors remain concerned about the robustness and reliability of the traffic modelling. These concerns include the impacts on the wider area, the potential for induced traffic, re-routing existing journeys, the extent to which behavioural change following Brexit and Covid has been taken into account, whether the Scheme adopts a decide and provide approach and whether the various scenarios had sufficient regard to uncertainty.

17.60. The LPA adopts a neutral position to the Scheme. At its meeting on 15 January 2024 the Committee did not dispute the findings of the Origin Technical Note. It did however request that the Scheme only be approved if the SoS is satisfied that the traffic modelling has robustly

examined the wider traffic impacts of the scheme and that conditions for bus prioritisation are attached to any planning permission.[7.7,7.8]

Impacts on the wider area

17.61. The Rule 6 parties consider that the impact of traffic on Abingdon, Nuneham Courtenay, and Golden Balls roundabout as well as other areas should have been assessed within the ES. The applicant's Technical Note (CD O.1) outlines the methodology used in the modelling. The junctions to be assessed were agreed with the LPA. [11.14,12.2,14.33,14.43,14,53,14.74,14.88]

Abingdon

17.62. The inclusion of Abingdon within the assessment was the subject of a Regulation 25 request at the time of the application in April 2022. The applicant responded to that request and the response was considered satisfactory at the time. The Planning and Regulation Committee, in July 2023, resolved that planning permission should be refused for a number of reasons including that the impact of traffic on Abingdon and Didcot had not been assessed.[457] [6.36]

17.63. Subsequent to the September 2023 Committee the applicant submitted a Technical Note addressing a number of matters, including traffic impacts in the wider area.[458] This was reviewed by Origin Transport Consultants. The Technical Note explained that the Scheme does not change people's route choice into or out of Abingdon. The route remains along the existing A415 as shown below.[6.36.7.8]

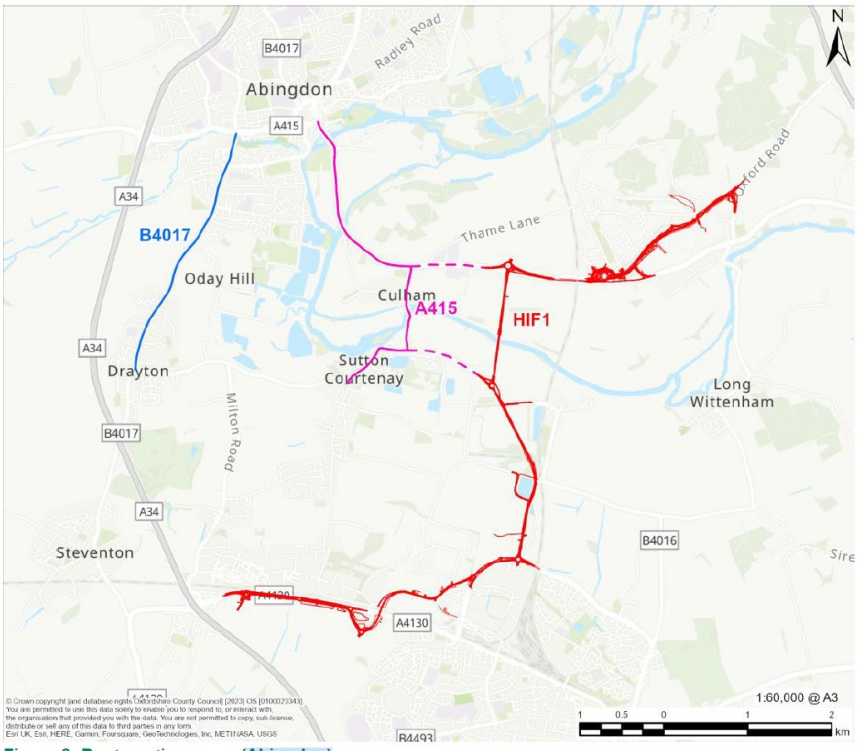
17.64. The modelling output for link 35 (A415 Abingdon Road) shows a 52% increase in traffic in 2034 with HIF1. This compares to a 3% increase with the Do Nothing (DN) scenario. Ms Currie explained that this is because DN flows on this link are suppressed in 2034 due to the network being congested at the A415/Tollgate Road junction, and the traffic cannot get through.[6.36]

17.65. Given that the Scheme does not change the routes into and out of Abingdon, I concur with the applicant that the increase in movements is created by growth in housing and employment in the area, rather than the Scheme. The independent Origin review reached the same conclusion. [6.36,13.27]

17.66. The level of growth and proposed mitigation was assessed by each of the Local Plan Inspectors and found to be sound. The strategic modelling identified a number of measures to deal with Local Plan growth, including in the Abingdon Area. These are included at Appendix 1 of the LTCP. These include a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Abingdon which will identify the infrastructure improvements required in the town, including the potential reprioritisation of road space.

[457] CD.F.2
[458] CD.O.1

Moreover, the impact of any future development not already permitted will be assessed through future planning applications and any necessary mitigation secured. The Origin Review concluded that further modelling of the HIF1 Scheme in relation to Abingdon was not required.[6.36,7.8]



Plan showing highway links to Abingdon

17.67. There are other projects and strategies that focus on future changes in and around Abingdon that deal with the impact arising from planned growth independently of HIF1.

Golden Balls Roundabout

17.68. The Clifton Hampden Bypass includes a road connecting the A415 in the west with the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden. The Golden Balls Roundabout is located directly north-west of this section of the Scheme. NPCJC and POETS state that although the traffic model included that junction, it was not included in the junction assessments provided for the Inquiry. [11.15,11.16,12.37,12.38,12.40,14.17,14.18,14.43]

17.69. POETS submit that the Clifton Hampden Bypass would re-route traffic that currently uses the A415 to pass through the village to access this roundabout (Link 41). They suggest that between 2024 and the 2034 with the Scheme there would be a 196% increase in traffic using Link 41, and a 93% decrease over the same period for traffic using the existing route (Link 39). The impact of this on Golden Balls roundabout was not assessed by the Transport Assessment. [12.38]

17.70. The Applicant contends that the Scheme would not increase traffic through the Golden Balls junction but would change the direction that the roundabout is approached from, rather than the overall flows at the roundabout. The modelling indicates that with the Scheme there will be a substantial decrease in traffic flows on the A415 Abingdon Road through Clifton Hampden and Burcot villages and a broadly corresponding increase on the B4015 Oxford Road to the North where it connects to the Clifton Hampden Bypass. For this reason, it was not assessed in the Transport Assessment. INQ67 provides details of the changes in flow. [6.37]

17.71. The applicant also informed the Inquiry that the A4074 Corridor Strategy is currently underway in accordance with Policy 53 of the LTCP, and SV policies in the Science Vale Area Strategy. As part of the Local Plan process it was included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan for several allocated development sites, requiring them to pay towards future changes. These specifically propose connectivity improvements at the Golden Balls roundabout, but these proposals do not form part of the HIF1 scheme. [6.37]

17.72. The Origin Review concluded that the lack of impact assessment work on Golden Balls is not an omission that requires attention as there is a separate mechanism and commitment from the Council to deal with impacts at the junction.[6.36,7.7]

17.73. The Golden Balls junction was included in the Paramics model, but not the Transport Assessment. The evidence is clear that the overall flows at Golden Balls would remain broadly similar with and without the Scheme, but as a consequence of the Scheme there would be a change in the direction of travel. I therefore do not consider that the failure to assess the Golden Balls roundabout in the Transport Assessment to detract from the robustness of the traffic modelling.

Nuneham Courtenay

17.74. Mr Williams and NPCJC believe that HIF1 will increase traffic through Nuneham Courtenay. In particular NPCJC believe the high volumes of traffic being delivered to Golden Balls roundabout will find it difficult to travel along the A4074 through Nuneham Courtenay given the 20mph speed limit. [11.12,11.14,11.16,12.40]

17.75. Nuneham Courtenay is situated on the A4074 to the north of Golden Balls roundabout. As discussed above, the Scheme would not significantly increase the traffic at Golden Balls roundabout. INQ 67 suggests a difference of 2% between the DS and DN figures in 2024, and a 6% difference in 2034 at Nuneham Courtenay. The applicant states that the DN figure is likely to be higher in practice since under the current arrangements traffic does not get through the network due to congestion. It is therefore apparent that the increase in traffic at Nuneham Courtenay would be primarily due to the growth in housing and employment rather than the Scheme. However, even if the increase

is 6% in 2034 this would not significantly increase congestion to the level suggested by the Rule 6 objectors. I therefore do not consider that it is necessary to model the traffic flows through Nuneham Courtenay.[6.38]

Milton Interchange

17.76. Councillor Beddow, on behalf of East Hendred Parish Council, considered that HIF1 will cause further overloading of the Milton interchange, adding to congestion in this area. He noted that the modelling did not include data from the Wantage traffic flow. In the areas to the west of Milton Interchange, on the A4130 towards Rowstock, East Hendred and Wantage, the assessment shows no material change in traffic flows as a result of the Scheme. These will either decrease or increase by less than 1%. Accordingly, I am satisfied that no wider modelling or assessment to the west is required.[14.75]

Induced and Re-routed Traffic

17.77. Numerous objectors referred to the failure of the model to take account of induced traffic. For the purposes of the model induced traffic occurs when a scheme causes people to travel by car rather than by public transport and/or decide to travel when they would not otherwise have done so. The applicant confirmed that the traffic modelling followed the transport appraisal methodology prescribed in TAG. On this basis there is a minimal change in trip numbers both with and without the Scheme. Professor Goodwin expressly accepted that he did not provide any evidence from the traffic modelling to suggest that it shows induced traffic.[6.41,6.42]

17.78. It would seem that many of the references to induced traffic actually concern re-routed traffic. The modelling forecasts traffic on the future network, including the Scheme, therefore any redistribution that may occur is intrinsic to the model. The model does not just assess the route of the Scheme, but, in accordance with TAG, a wider geographical area to allow for strategic rerouting. [6.43,11.7]

17.79. Objectors suggest that traffic may divert from the A34 and use the HIF1 roads in order to join the A4074 at the Golden Balls roundabout. The traffic modelling does not support this view. Moreover, the route via the HIF1 roads is approximately 20 kilometres in length with the need to navigate 13 junctions and has sections limited to 30mph and 40mph (including 20mph in Nuneham Courtenay), whereas the route via the A34 is approximately 15 kilometres in length with the need to navigate two junctions and for the vast majority is on 70mph roads.459 In these circumstances the HIF1 Scheme would not be an attractive alternative for drivers to reroute from the A34 to/from Oxford and beyond. I do however acknowledge that when the A34 is closed or subject to severe disruption it may be that some vehicles do reroute, but this would be an

[459] See Ms Currie Appendix CC2.7 para 4.21, including Figure 1 showing the two alternative routes (pdf page 65).

occasional occurrence and does not indicate that the modelling is flawed.[6.44,11.7,14.30]

17.80. NPCJC state that there is potential for drivers who would not otherwise go through Abingdon or Nuneham Courtenay to do so once the Scheme is complete. However, these routes would be unchanged by the Scheme, and there is no evidence to support NPCJC's view.[11.13]

Behavioural change

17.81. Some objectors questioned the traffic data and assumptions underpinning the traffic modelling in the light of behavioural changes following Brexit and Covid. In particular it was contended that there had been a reduction in traffic levels since the pandemic, an increase in home shopping and home working, a reduction in the number of people holding driving licences and an anticipated 25% reduction in the housing requirement in the emerging JLP. Mr Turnbull, on behalf of East Hendred Parish Council considered that the 2022 NRTP projections should be used in place of the 2013 figures within the OSM since they better reflect behavioural changes.[11.19,12.36,13,13,13.32]

17.82. Data from automatic traffic counters on the local highway network from the pre-Covid and post-Covid years, along with data from the A34 for the strategic highway network shows that overall flows are well within acceptable percentage daily variation such that their difference between pre and post Covid years can be considered insignificant. [6.45]

17.83. It may be that the behavioural changes referred to could lead to a reduction in demand, but at the present time there is insufficient evidence to support such a view. Few people work from home during the entire week. In the case of CSC, Sir Ian Chapman advised that in the case of UKAEA most people worked at the campus for about 60% of the week. UKAEA stated that the suggestion of working from home more showed a gross misunderstanding of the work it does and the need for employees to be on site in order to collaborate. [10.7,10.11,10.24,]

17.84. The need for HIF1 is due to existing traffic congestion as well as the need to accommodate significant growth in the future, and the evidence clearly shows that there is a need for the road. HIF1 does not just seek to meet the needs of the employers within the area, but also to address existing congestion issues and meet the demand of future residents. Evidence from the VWH and SODC was clear that it is not intended to reduce the planned housing requirement in the future. Any intention to do so would need to be evidence based and be considered in the context of the emerging JLP. Accordingly, the reliance on the housing figures in the adopted development plans is appropriate. [7.21,8.9,8.44,8.45,9.109,13.18,14.114,14.117, 14.140, 15.26,15.30, 15.39]

17.85. No substantive evidence was submitted to the Inquiry to suggest that the behavioural change referred to by objectors merits a change to the traffic modelling.

Decide and Provide

17.86. Many objectors contend that the modelling is based on a predict and provide methodology rather than the decide and provide promoted by the LTCP. This concern was shared by the Planning and Regulation Committee, but on the basis of the two Technical Notes the LPA is satisfied that the decide and provide approach has been taken into account with sustainable travel measures included as key components of the Scheme.[6.55]

17.87. The decide and provide approach is integral to the LTCP. It decides on the preferred future and then provides the means to work towards it. There is general consensus that it offers the opportunity for more positive transport planning and helps implement a transport user hierarchy by considering walking and cycling at the start. Predict and provide can be broadly described as an approach to transport planning that uses current or historical traffic patterns to determine the future need for infrastructure. However, such an approach tends to simply maintain the status quo, particularly in terms of modal split.

17.88. The applicant stated that although the traffic modelling was undertaken before the LTCP was adopted, it nevertheless used a decide and provide approach. The Transport Assessment makes it clear that the Scheme does not aim to provide unlimited highway capacity or remove all congestion but is part of a balanced transport strategy which also provides high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, helping to engender modal shift to more sustainable modes. The transport model for the 2034 year assumes 80% demand of vehicular trips (of new housing and employment demand) compared to 'normal'. [6.52]

17.89. If a predict and provide method had been used it would have catered for 100% demand of vehicular trips for future growth and the Scheme would have been designed to cater for that full amount of traffic growth.

17.90. The future year modelling (2034) utilised the housing and employment trajectories provided by the District Councils, rather than the full amount of growth identified within the Local Plans. In some cases, the sites will not be fully built out by 2034. For example, the land adjacent to CSC is allocated in the SOLP for approximately 3,500 new homes but has been modelled at 1,850 dwellings in accordance with the trajectory. Consequently, the Scheme has been assessed against a lower level of growth and therefore accounts for fewer vehicle trips than might otherwise be expected.[6.53]

17.91. Both Professor Goodwin, and the Origin Report acknowledge at a decide and provide approach has been used. On the basis of the information submitted to the Inquiry, I am satisfied that the modelling is

underpinned by a decide and provide approach. Far from creating a more car dependant lifestyle as suggested by a number of objectors, the Scheme positively embraces sustainable transport and active travel. Sustainable travel measures, including high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, bus priority measures and additional road capacity to enable future bus services to operate efficiently, are included as key components of the Scheme. As such the Scheme would help to support modal shift. [6.42,12.24]

Uncertainty

17.92. Professor Goodwin drew attention to the 'scenario analysis' required under the Uncertainty Toolkit associated with the latest version of DfT's TAG Unit M4 Forecasting and Uncertainty. He also relied on the National Road Transport Predictions (NRTP) 2022 and highlighted the large range of traffic growth in the forecasting period of 35 years from 8% to 54%. The changes resulted in a new format for the DfT's 2022 NRTP, and the treatment of 'uncertainty' in appraisals.

17.93. Professor Goodwin explained that it is now recommended that appraisals should use all the scenarios for big or complex interventions, with a simplified appraisal for smaller interventions. He accepted that methods and assumptions used in modelling and assessments were TAG compliant at the time the work was originally done. He also acknowledged that the appraisal does not need to be updated to reflect this new guidance. [12.25]

Conclusion on Traffic Modelling

17.94. The case put forward by some objectors in relation to the traffic modelling appears to be confused. On the one hand they suggest that due to behavioural change the traffic model overestimates the need for HIF1, such that it may be a 'white elephant', and on the other hand that the model has failed to take account of induced and re-routed traffic such that it underestimates the impacts on surrounding communities.

17.95. I conclude that the traffic modelling is robust. It follows a methodology and scope agreed with the LPA and has been independently reviewed on behalf of the LPA as well as the Local Highway Authority. I agree that it is not necessary to explicitly assess the impact of the Scheme on Abingdon, which it is acknowledged suffers from heavy traffic, since the modelling includes both routes into Abingdon. There is no evidence that the Scheme would give rise to induced traffic and the modelling is designed to account for any rerouting that may occur. Whilst there have been behavioural changes, due to Covid in particular, the available traffic data does not indicate that the modelling needs to be revised or re-assessed. It is also evident that the Scheme has been developed using a decide and provide approach.

17.96. Therefore, taking account of the information submitted prior to the application being called in, together with the two Technical Notes, I am

satisfied that the approach to modelling is robust. I note that this view is shared by the Local Highway Authority and the independent consultants appointed by the LPA to review the modelling.

Whether the proposal would make acceptable provision for sustainable travel, including walking and cycling and accord with the LTCP

17.97. Chapter 9 of the NPPF promotes sustainable transport. Paragraph 109 advises that significant development should be focused on locations which are, or can be made, sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. Both Local Plans reflect this guidance. In the case of the VWH LLP1 the relevant policies are CP17 which identifies the highways infrastructure to mitigate the impact of the planned growth across Science Vale; Policy CP33 which promotes sustainable transport; Policy CP35 which promotes public transport, cycling and walking. Core Policy 16b of VWH LPP2 requires proposals to demonstrate how they positively contribute to the achievement of the Didcot Garden Town Masterplan Principles. Together these policies provide for improvements to the bus and cycling network. Specific requirements include in the case of Valley Park a footpath and cycleway from Great Western Park and the existing local centre to Milton Park, and for North West of Valley Park the provision of footpaths, cycleways, the opportunity to link pedestrian and cycle routes to Milton Heights and bus service contributions. [8.21]

17.98. Mr Turnbull, on behalf of East Hendred Parish Council, alleged that Policy CP17 was inconsistent with paragraph 116 of the NPPF in that it failed to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements. However, in addition to the provision for motorised vehicles, the improvements include Backhill Lane tunnel which is a pedestrian and cycle link, together with the improvement of the strategic cycle and bus network including a priority bus system. The Plan must be read as a whole and Policies CP33 and CP35 together promote sustainable transport, including walking and cycling. The wording of paragraph 116 of the NPPF is unchanged from the previous iteration and the Local Plan was found sound. I find no inconsistency between Policy CP33 of VWH LPP1 and paragraph 116 of the NPPF.[8.17] [8.18. 8.19]

17.99. Mr Butler's evidence was that the HIF1 scheme is supported by criteria i), ii), iii), iv) and vi) of CP33. He is also of the view that the proposals seek to improve the local road network by providing additional capacity to accommodate traffic flows from planned development. The proposals provide for bus services together with pedestrian and cycle paths. These connect with existing and planned housing and with commercial developments providing residents and employees with options for sustainable travel. [8.20]

17.100. The SOLP Policy TRANS2 similarly promotes Sustainable Transport and Accessibility and supports the provision of measures which improve public transport (including Park & Ride), cycling and walking networks within and between towns and villages in the District. Policy TRANS5

specifically requires developments to provide safe and convenient routes for cyclists and pedestrians.

17.101. Evidence submitted to the Inquiry illustrates that the locations for the larger developments within the SOLP are at locations that are, or can be made, sustainable. In addition, Policy STRAT 9 and STRAT 10 require future development on these sites to deliver improvements to bus services. As confirmed by Ms Baker and Mr Wisdom the delivery of large amounts of housing at Culham would support the business case for improved rail frequency at Culham. [9.7-9.12,9.29, 9.30,9.31,11.29]

17.102. The Science Vale Area Strategy within LTP4 remains adopted policy until it is superseded by the forthcoming update to the area travel plans in the LTCP. The LTCP was adopted in July 2022 and aims to deliver a net zero transport network by 2040. It seeks to achieve this through reducing the need to travel and the use of private cars through making walking, cycling, public and shared transport the natural first choice. Appendix 1 reviews the Science Vale Strategy and includes all four elements of the Scheme. It includes a number of policies that promote walking, cycling and public transport. The LTCP confirms that its priority is to reduce car use and the need to travel, but recognises that in some cases new roads, or widening roads and junctions may be necessary, to ensure a reliable and effective transport network.

17.103. The HIF1 Scheme is an integral part of the LTCP policy. The Origin Review concluded that the Scheme contributes to modal shift by linking with the Strategic and Science Vale Active Travel and LCWIP schemes.[8.22]

17.104. Objectors contend that the scheme does not encourage modal shift, which they consider essential in order to address climate change. One criticism is that the Traffic Regulation Orders are only to be provided after the Scheme has been given planning permission. In their view as well as incentives to use sustainable transport, there should also be disincentives for using a car. A comparison was made with Oxford City where car use declined despite an increase in population. The measures to support this modal shift included parking charges, limiting parking supply, and city centre traffic restrictions.

17.105. HIF1 is one part of an overall strategy for Oxfordshire. The Active Travel Strategy (part of the LTCP) recognises the need for modal shift. It proposes reducing and restricting car parking availability and introducing parking charges and states that these are essential measures to induce behavioural change. However, such measures need to be implemented at destinations rather than along a route. Moreover, Traffic Regulation Orders cannot be made in respect of roads that have not yet been permitted. For this reason, it is difficult to provide the 'sticks' sought by some objectors as part of HIF1.

17.106. HIF1 would incentivise modal shift due to the improved and safer walking and cycling networks, as well as the provision for bus services

and by the location of housing and employment sites to minimise travel. There is compelling evidence from both Oxford Bus Company and the Culham Bus Club to indicate that HIF1 is essential to the maintenance and improvement of bus services. As explained above the proposed walking and cycling infrastructure would represent a substantial improvement by comparison with that which exists at present. In addition, Sir Ian Chapman explained that the modal shift that is a fundamental part of UKAEA's vision for the CSC. The Scheme would also assist with facilitating active travel links from Berinsfield to Culham. [8.12,8.13, 10.20,11.39,11.110, 12.7,13.39]

17.107. NCPJC consider that any likelihood of Appleford (and also Sutton Courtenay) residents benefitting from modal shift as a result of the provision on the HIF scheme is slight, since the villages will have the same poor provision of cycling/crossings etc as they do now on the routes that go to meet HIF1. Mrs Casey Rerhaye, on behalf of NPCJC, explained that most children in Appleford are driven to school in Sutton Courtenay since there is no safe alternative and no plans for any. The Scheme includes a new 3m shared use facility on the north side of B4016 which will connect with the segregated facilities along the A4197. A parallel crossing will provide priority for pedestrians and cyclists over the traffic on B4016. At the Sutton Courtenay Roundabout, a signalised toucan crossing will be provided on the northern arm to provide a safe crossing point. Shared used facilities are proposed on both sides of the B4016 towards Sutton Courtenay west of the Scheme. This would be a significant improvement by comparison with existing facilities. [11.102]

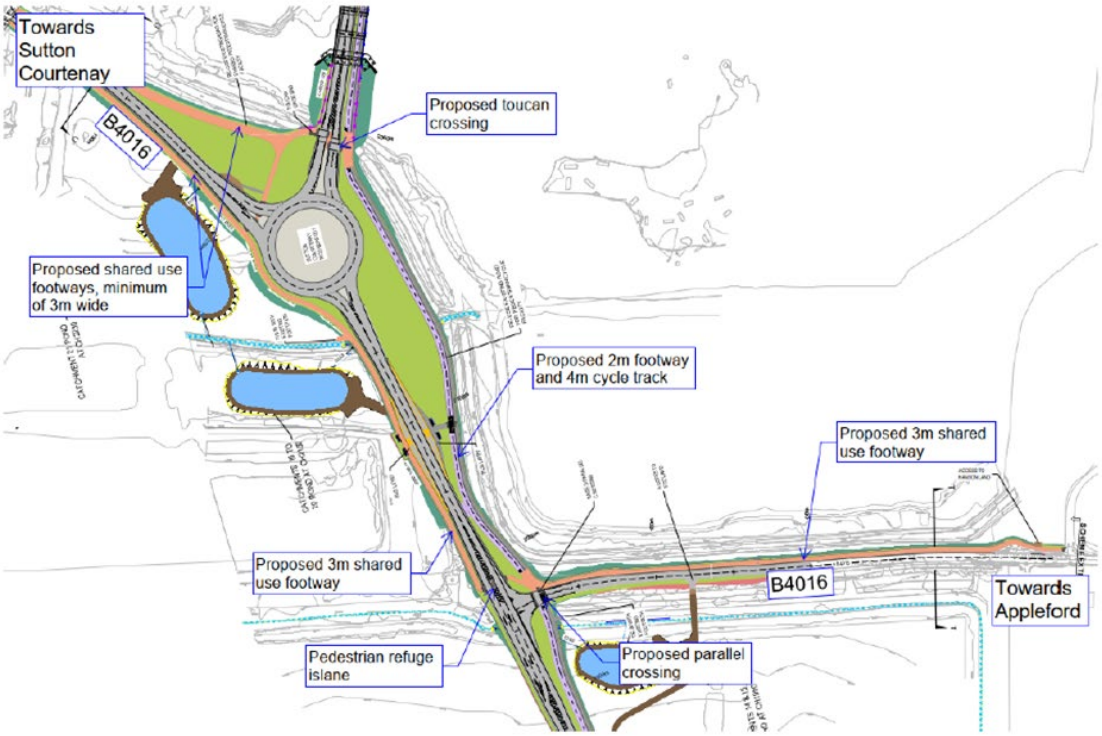


Figure 32 Proposed walking and cycling facilities between Appleford and Sutton Courtenay

17.108. A number of parties stated that the provision for cycling would not be attractive to cyclists since it would be close to a busy carriageway and cyclists would need to negotiate numerous T junctions and roundabouts. The preference was for more rural routes. [11.96,11.97]

17.109. HIF1 would provide approximately 20km of new and/or improved off-carriageway and high-quality cycling and pedestrian infrastructure and a direct route between Milton Park and the CSC. It would provide a spine that would allow for links from planned housing and employment development. As explained above, for most of the route there would be a generous separation between cyclists and traffic. The rural routes suggested by the objectors are not a realistic alternative to HIF1. They would serve a lesser number of cyclists and would be unlikely to deliver or facilitate a comprehensive network. There would also be a constraint on delivering such routes, since rural lanes are often unlit, enclosed by trees, hedgerows, and sometimes dwellings directly fronting the road.[11.9]

17.110. Several objectors advocated the need for improved/additional bus services. The Scheme would improve bus travel by providing additional highway network capacity and bus priority measures. This would improve resilience and journey time reliability. As evidenced by the Oxford Bus Company and the Culham School Bus Club, amongst others, the existing congestion is an impediment to current and future regular reliable bus services. The Oxford Bus Company states that the failure to

deliver HIF1 would directly threaten the long-term sustainability of the current bus service offer and prevent the delivery of important new bus services to the north of Didcot in the medium to long term.

17.111. HIF1 is plainly part of an integrated transport strategy that includes provision for walking and cycling, as well as improvements to bus services. The Scheme would not address every issue within the Science Vale but is one part of a wider walking and cycling strategy. By bringing forward the strategic housing allocations at Culham and Berinsfield, HIF1 will unlock further active travel improvements in the area. [9.27, 9.28 , 9.29]

17.112. The sustainable transport benefits of the Scheme are considerable, both in terms of the infrastructure it would provide and the benefits directly flowing from this, as well as its role in facilitating other schemes within the LTCP. In this respect HIF1 would encourage and facilitate modal shift. Although it would not fully address sustainable transport within smaller rural communities and villages, there would nevertheless be some benefits to these communities both through the provision of infrastructure and in the case of Appleford, Sutton Courtenay and Clifton Hampden, significant reductions in traffic. The benefits to the larger communities, such as Didcot and the occupants of the emerging housing and employment sites would be considerable. Within these communities it would improve opportunities for walking and cycling and support other sustainable transport measures within the LTCP. Overall, I find that HIF1 would make acceptable provision for sustainable travel, including walking and cycling and accord with the LTCP and would be compliant with Policies CP17, CP33,CP35 of the VWH LLP1, Core Policy 16b of VWH LLP2, and SOLP Policies TRANS2, TRANS5 STRAT 9 and STRAT 10, as well as Chapter 9 of the NPPF.

Consideration of Alternatives

17.113. The EIA Regulations state that an ES should provide a "description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects".

17.114. The ES includes a description of the alternatives studied by the Applicant and the reasons for the selection of the preferred route, with a comparison of environmental effects as is required by the EIA Regulations. The alternatives considered included different transport modes, public transport, active travel and different highways schemes. It was concluded that whilst some of the options would have lesser environmental effects, only a major road scheme would address the transport issues and requirements of the area.[6.63]

17.115. The optioneering process is outlined in Mr Wisdom's evidence. In summary, the Options Appraisal Report 2021 Phase 1 assessed 16

options. These options were scored against the Scheme's objectives and additional criteria (affordability, deliverability, acceptability, and feasibility). These options included, but were not limited to an enhanced bus network including bus lanes and bus priority signals; Park and Ride in vicinity of A34; improved rail services from Didcot to Oxford and Reading; improved stations at Didcot and Culham, plus a new station at Grove; comprehensive cycle and walking networks within Didcot; Science Vale Bus Rapid Transit; Science Vale Light Rail Link; Demand Responsive Transport; and small scale bus improvements across Science Vale.[6.64]

17.116. The five options with the highest scores were taken forward to Phase 2. These were tested against the business case criteria and the benefits of the five options were clearly defined, whilst also highlighting the areas in which each option did not perform well. A number of sub-options were identified within each option. These related to each of the four elements of the Scheme. The sub-options considered design, location, size, and scale alternatives to the four preferred options.[6.64]

17.117. The comprehensive cycling and walking network intervention was discounted as a scheme in its own right, due to it not meeting all scheme objectives. Notwithstanding this, high quality segregated cycling and walking routes have been provided throughout the Scheme.[6.64]

17.118. The applicant states that Stakeholders and the public largely supported the proposals and the preferred option (with some amendments) with twice as many people supporting rather than objecting to the Scheme overall. Changes were made to reflect concerns, including moving the Didcot to Culham river crossing west to take account of environmental concerns of Appleford Parish Council, the inclusion of low noise road surfacing and noise barriers at sensitive locations, and amending the alignment of the Clifton Hampden bypass to take account of environmental concerns raised by Clifton Hampden Parish Council.[6.65]

17.119. The Rule 6 objectors (and some other interested parties) have suggested that HIF1 is not essential, and that the planned housing growth in this area can be unlocked with other transport solutions/plans based on active travel or public transport improvements. They put forward a range of alternatives. These included making better use of the railway with park and ride provision, highspeed, reliable bus links, a segregated cycleway and footway around the Science Vale, reducing the housing requirement, increased home working, building a lightweight crossing across the Thames for high-speed bus services, and vertical take-off/flying taxis.

17.120. Case law addresses the circumstances in which alternative proposals may be material considerations when determining planning applications. They are summarised in R (Save Stonehenge World Heritage Site Ltd) v Secretary of State for Transport [2022] PTSR 74. This draws on the legal principles summarised by Auld LJ in *Mount Cook*

Land Ltd v Westminster City Council [2004] 2 P & CR 22. The key points identified in paragraph 30 include that:

- in the absence of conflict with planning policy and/or other planning harm, the relative advantages of alternative uses on the application site or of the same use on alternative sites are normally irrelevant in planning terms; and

- even in exceptional circumstances where alternative proposals might be relevant, inchoate or vague schemes and/or those that are unlikely or have no real possibility of coming about would not be relevant or, if they were, should be given little or no weight. [6.62,9.33,10.21]

17.121. OCC and SODC contend that the HIF1 scheme is in accordance with the development plan as a whole and is acceptable. As set out above, the Scheme forms part of the relevant development plans and underpins the approach to, and distribution of, housing and employment across the Science Vale. The Scheme is also supported by the LTCP. It therefore accords with the NPPF which requires that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Conflict with other specific development plan policies is considered below and the applicant acknowledges that there would be some planning harm, including in relation to heritage assets, the Green Belt, and some landscape and visual harm, but considers that this harm is clearly outweighed by the need for and benefits of the Scheme.

17.122. VWH, SODC, UKAEA and OCC all agree that no party has identified exceptional circumstances such that alternatives should be considered. Objectors take the view that material considerations including the update to the NPPF, changed assumptions within Oxfordshire in relation to road building, and increased climate change awareness, are all material considerations that justify a fresh round of optioneering. As I found above, there is no inconsistency between the policies within the Local Plans and the NPPF, and the Scheme is consistent with the adopted Local Plans and the LTCP. However, even where alternative proposals might be relevant, the Mount Cook judgement found that inchoate or vague schemes and/or those that are unlikely or have no real possibility of coming about would not be relevant or, if they were, should be given little or no weight. [6.67,11.22]

17.123. I agree that the alternatives put forward by objectors are inchoate and vague and amount to little more than suggestions. Moreover, alternatives such as highspeed, reliable bus links and a segregated cycleway and footway around the Science Vale actually form part of the HIF1 Scheme and in the absence of the additional road capacity and river crossing provided by the Scheme these would not be deliverable. I agree with the supporters of the Scheme that this objection is not based on any identified alternative, but merely contends that alternatives needed to be investigated again. [6.67,8.57,9.33, 9.35,10.22]

17.124. The concerns raised by the Rule 6 objectors and others include:

- That there was no equally detailed assessment of non-road packages or measures;
- Carbon emissions and the impact on/benefits to local communities were not taken into account;
- There should be a fresh round of optioneering to re-appraise alternatives to road building;
- Examples from Cambridge, Chippenham and the South of France show what is achievable. [11.20,11.21,11.22,11.23,12.24-29,13.39,14.84,14.92,14.96]

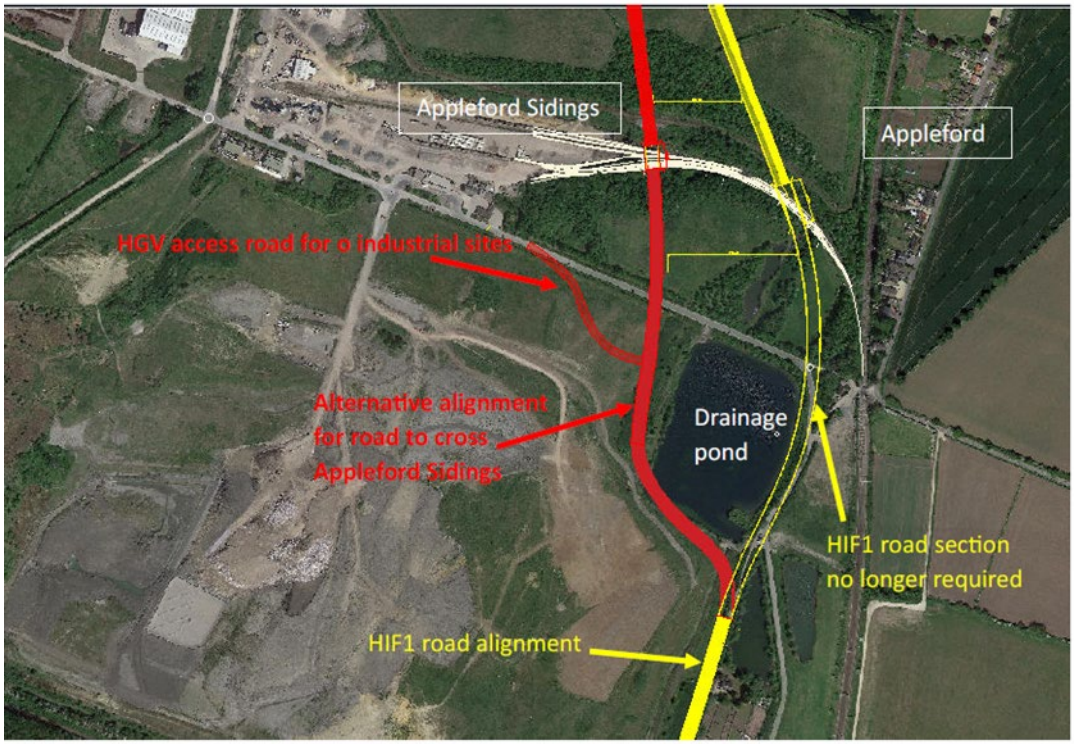
17.125. Non-road options were considered but for the reasons set out in the Options Assessment Report 2021 and Mr Wisdom's evidence were not taken forward.460 Improvements to stations at Culham and Didcot, as well as a new station at Grove were taken forward for further assessment. These were assessed as not being able to support the level of growth in and around Didcot, nor solve any of the congestion issues in the local area. However, the benefits to Grove and Wantage were recognised and are to be taken forward as a separate project with a separate business case. As set out above HIF1 is not expected to resolve all congestion issues but is an integral part of the overall transport strategy for Science Vale.[6.63]

17.126. The fact that some of the non-road options suggested by objectors were not taken forward does not mean that they were not considered. The evidence submitted to the Inquiry demonstrates that the optioneering process was extensive and thorough. There is no evidence to support the view that an alternative scheme which did not include a new road could provide adequate mitigation for the planned housing growth in the DGT area. Indeed, even some of the options put forward by objectors, such as segregated cycle and pedestrian routes and more efficient bus services require new highway infrastructure. I find that there is no compelling evidence to justify a fresh round of optioneering. [6.65,9.35]

17.127. The suggestion that the carbon emissions arising from the various options were not considered is not supported by the evidence. Scheme objectives 7 & 8 included carbon emissions.461 The fact that other schemes have been used in other locations such as Cambridge, Chippenham and the south of France does not mean that the applicant failed to consider other reasonable alternatives to the Scheme, and no assessment of the extent of the infrastructure required to deliver schemes such as those suggested has been provided.

17.128. Mr Hancock, on behalf of NPCJC, considers that if a road is required the harm to Appleford could be reduced by increasing the distance between the road and the dwellings. He submitted a supplementary proof of evidence in support of this option.[11.90]

[460] CDA.19 Appendix A & Mr Wisdom PoE paragraph 8.31-8.50
[461] CD A.19 Appendix A Section 4



17.129. NPCJC suggest that the realignment of the sidings bridge and the approach road would provide a number of benefits. These include increasing the distance from the existing dwellings and thus reducing traffic noise, and air pollution. Under this scheme the bridge structure would cross perpendicular to the sidings rail tracks and NPCJC state that it would be much simpler and less expensive to construct. They also submit that approximately 400m of HIF1 road would no longer be required and there would be no conflict with the drainage pond and landfill since the modification adopts the HIF1 branch alignment to the south and west of the pond.

17.130. Prior to the submission of the application Appleford Parish Council submitted two alternative alignments for HIF1.[462] These options were not considered to be feasible due to the impact on the operation of the power station and the aggregates site, and the need to cut through deep active landfill, some areas of which are more than 40 metres deep. OCC explained that it is likely to take a number of years for the ground to settle, there are practical issues with piling on a landfill site. This evidence was not disputed. The alignment proposed by Mr Hancock would cut across the south-west corner of the rectangular FCC lake, which is used for drainage by FCC. It would also involve excavating landfill, due to the new access track to the west of the pond crossing landfill. As explained by OCC it would require a longer bridge as the sidings are wider at the point it is proposed to cross. The point at which

[462] Mr Wisdom PoE figures 19 & 20

it would cross is about 2m higher than the current alignment, so potentially increasing visual impacts and costs.[463] [6.69]

17.131. It was also suggested that a level crossing would be preferable to a bridge, since the Appleford sidings may be redeveloped in the future and then the bridge would not be required. No substantive evidence was submitted to indicate that the existing activity at the sidings is due to cease in the near future. The railway sidings are privately operated, and trains are loaded and unloaded throughout the day. The level crossing would introduce driver delay, thereby undermining one of the objectives of the Scheme and potentially making the road less attractive. Moreover, level crossings are intrinsically unsafe, and even though it would only be used to manage railway sidings rather than the mainline, a bridge would be a much safer option and would include provision for pedestrians and cyclists.[6.70,11.11]

17.132. It is evident from Mr Wisdom's Proof of Evidence that the applicant has considered alternative alignments for the road and the possibility of a level crossing at Appleford. These alternatives have been the subject of extensive discussions with various stakeholders but have been found to be unsuitable for a number of reasons. Delaying the Scheme to further explore the suggested alternatives would give rise to uncertainty and be likely to delay the delivery of much needed housing and employment growth, as well as prolonging the existing congestion problems. Given the alternatives considered by the applicant, as well as the objectives of the Scheme, I am not persuaded that it would be likely to come up with a fundamentally different scheme to that proposed.

17.133. I conclude that the applicant's assessment of alternatives, including non-road options was extensive and thorough and adequate reasons for the selection of the preferred route have been provided. Consequently, there is no compelling evidence to justify a fresh round of optioneering.

The effect of the proposal on climate change and carbon emissions

17.134. The effect of the proposal on climate change and carbon emissions is addressed at ES Chapter 15 – Climate. This assesses the effects on the climate of greenhouse gases (GHGs) arising from the construction and operation of the Scheme.[464] The Climate Change assessment work for the Scheme, considers the impact of the Scheme on the climate - the GHG assessment - and also the impact of projected climate change on the Scheme itself - the CCR assessment.

17.135. Following a Reg 25 request two further documents were submitted. The Climate Change Position Statement outlines measures within the Scheme to reduce climate effects, details on minimising climate impacts, operational phase mitigation, landscape and ecology mitigation, flood

[463] See figures 23, 24, 26 and 27 in Mr Wisdom's proof, p. 73-76.
[464] CDA.15.15.

risk assessments, and vulnerability to Climate Change.[465] The Reg 25 Climate Impact Assessment includes details on energy use, transport and connectivity. It includes resilient local smart energy systems, LED street lighting, BNG, and resilience to flooding and extreme weather events.[466]

17.136. The applicant reviewed relevant policy and guidance published since the ES was produced. The review confirmed the Scheme's compliance with the established standards and methodologies and found that the updates did not have a material impact on the assessment outcomes.[467][6.122]

17.137. SOLP Policy DES 8 promotes sustainable design. Amongst other matters it requires new development to be designed to improve resilience to the anticipated effects of climate change. It also requires new developments to seek to minimise the carbon and energy impacts of their design and construction and demonstrate they are seeking to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF states that new developments should be planned in ways that can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through location, orientation and design. [9.48]

GHG Emissions

17.138. The GHG effects were assessed against the 4th, 5th and 6th UK national carbon budgets, and took account of both construction and operational effects which are aligned with the UK's net zero carbon targets.

17.139. The assessment shows that GHG effects during the Scheme construction phase (including the embodied carbon in construction materials) are predicted to be minor adverse and therefore not significant. During operation the Scheme would reduce GHG emissions compared to the without the Scheme scenario. Therefore, the Scheme is predicted to have a minor beneficial effect in respect of GHG emissions during the operational phase, due to a reduction in congestion and journey times resulting from the improvements to the road network.[468][6.121]

17.140. The ES determined significance of GHG effects by reference to the UK carbon budgets. A level of less than 1% of the carbon budget is not considered to be significant.[469] The Scheme's contribution to the UK's 4th carbon budget (for 2023 – 2027) is 0.0077%, comprising 154,842t CO2e for construction and -4,601t CO2e for operation (i.e. a reduction for operation compared with the do-nothing baseline). There would be no construction contribution to later carbon budgets as the Scheme would be built, and the operational emissions would be reduced.[6.121]

[465] CD B.2 Appendix K
[466] CD B.2 Appendix L
[467] Mr Landsburgh POE Appendix CL2.2
[468] ES Chapter 8, para. 15.10.11 (CDA.15.15).
[469] ES Chapter 8, paras. 15.4.14 – 15.4.23 (CDA.15.15).

17.141. Mitigation measures have been embedded into the Scheme design to minimise the effects of carbon emissions. These include design enhancements, more efficient construction processes, and a focus on re-use of materials and waste reduction. These mitigation measures are secured through the CEMP and the SWMP. During the operational phase GHG mitigation measures include energy-efficient road lighting design and encouraging low-carbon forms of transport through the construction of the shared cycleways / footways. In addition, a CMP is required by condition to support carbon reductions, by quantifying emissions, setting targets, monitoring and reporting. This will support compliance with SOLP Policy DES 8. [6.131]

17.142. NPCJC does not accept the applicant's position on emissions and suggests that OCC is unlikely to achieve its climate targets which require a net zero transport network by 2040 and has greatly underestimated the emissions from HIF1. [11.29,11.30]

17.143. Mr Ng, on behalf of NPCJC, noted an increase in car use and carbon emissions since the end of the pandemic lockdown and predicted that there will not be any reversal of this trend. Within the VWH and SODC he found that the number of car trips increased by 4.5% between 2019 and 2022. Mr Ng starts his trajectory in 2020 and as he accepted during cross examination the trajectory is only not met because of the 2021 pandemic year, which was an anomalous year as he accepted. He acknowledged that if the trajectory had been started in 2019(in accordance with what is standard carbon accounting practice), then there would be no departure from the trajectory.[6.130,

17.144. NPCJC disputes that operational emissions would be lower with the Scheme by comparison with the Do Nothing scenario due to the increase in traffic and the failure to take account of induced traffic. Mr Ng contended that GHG emissions are underestimated by a factor of 3.9. NPCJC estimates that HIF1's user emissions up to 2050 are around 326ktCO2 and when added to the OCC's estimates of embodied emissions, would significantly exceed the OCC's estimate of around 124ktCO2.

17.145. As confirmed by Mr Ng at the Inquiry, this assessment is based on the assumption that induced demand should be accounted for within the traffic modelling for the Scheme and that this has not been considered. I found above, in relation to transport modelling that the Scheme did not give rise to any significant induced traffic and also that the model assesses the redistribution of trips across the network. I found the modelling to be robust.[11.33]

17.146. Mr Ng's assumptions regarding induced traffic are based on research by the TfQL's assessment of 63 schemes. Mr Landsburgh explained that these schemes comprised a wide range of projects, including motorways and tunnels, many of which were not at all comparable to the HIF1 Scheme, and a number were old (some over 12

years old).[470] I therefore do not find that the TfQL data provides a reliable alternative to the applicant's bespoke modelling data.[6.130]

17.147. I agree with the applicant that there is no reliable evidence to suggest that the Scheme would give rise to induced traffic. Therefore, there is no reliable evidence to support Mr Ng's that the GHG emission have been substantially underestimated and I find the applicant's evidence to be more reliable.

17.148. NPCJC were also critical of the failure to assess the Scheme against the local carbon budget for Oxfordshire and referenced research by the Tyndall Centre at the University of Manchester. Mr Ng suggested that HIF1 would consume around 20% of the carbon budget, equivalent to the annual car emissions of around 350,000 South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse residents. [6.130,11.34,11.35]

17.149. The Tyndall Centre budget is an energy-only budget, which does not include transport sector emissions. As explained by OCC local carbon budgets, have no basis in law or policy and as confirmed by caselaw, the national carbon budgets are considered lawful. Moreover, due to the cross-boundary nature of journeys, the impact of emissions is not limited to a geographical, or administrative boundary. [6.130,11.35]

Climate Change Resilience

17.150. The Scheme has been designed to take account of vulnerability to changing climate patterns. It has had regard to extreme weather events, temperature and precipitation. The Climate Change Position Statement provides a summary of the measures embedded within the Scheme to reduce climate effects as far as practicable, along with details of additional measures that are proposed to be secured through condition in the interests of sustainable development, if planning permission is granted. A climate change allowance of 35% has been added to the 1% annual exceedance probability (AEP) storm used to assess fluvial flood risks and the design of the Scheme drainage systems.[6.63]

17.151. Measures during construction include the Outline Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) that will provide the basis for the CEMP. The aim is to plan to reduce energy consumption and associated carbon emissions; manage material resources; where possible, the use of local construction staff; use contractors/ suppliers with low emission fleet vehicles; and implement waste management measures. [6.131]

17.152. During operation a range of design, mitigation and enhancement measures embedded within the Scheme, such as energy efficient lighting and the encouragement of low or carbon neutral forms of transport would assist with minimising emissions.[6.131

[470] Evidence in chief (day 11, 29 March 2024).

Climate Change Policy

17.153. The Rule 6 objectors and several other parties raised concerns that the proposal is unacceptable in the light of the national and international context of climate change. In particular, it is contended that the UK planning system is too slow in its response to climate change and that a radical approach to transport planning in southern Oxfordshire is urgently required to address this challenge.[12.10,12.11,12.12]

17.154. Government policy on decarbonising the transport sector is contained in the TDP. It will be achieved in large part through non-planning measures. It is not government policy for there to be a moratorium of all road-building schemes. In its response to the CCC 2023 Annual Progress Report to Parliament (October 2023), the Government did not accept the CCC's recommendation to conduct a review of current and future road-building projects, and instead explained that the environmental assessment of individual road projects would "allow consenting authorities to assess the project's consistency with the Government's goals and legislation". [6.126]

17.155. The Climate Change Act 2008 provides for the setting of carbon budgets and requires the SoS to ensure that the budget is not exceeded. As explained above the Scheme carbon emissions from the Scheme during operation would reduce by comparison with the do nothing scenario. There would be an increase during construction, but as referred to above, this would be less than 0.0077% of the 4th carbon budget.[6.121]

17.156. Some objectors referred to the Paris Agreement. The Climate Change Act 2008 and the delegated legislation by which the carbon budgets are set is the UK's mechanism for complying with its obligations under the Paris Agreement. For that reason, it is incorrect to suggest that the Scheme is in conflict with the Paris Agreement.[6.127]

17.157. POETS state that development plans support for HIF1 or a similar road is outweighed by the imperatives of combating climate change and implementing genuinely sustainable development. In support of these views, both POETS and other parties refer to the LTCP Policy 36. This states that road capacity schemes will only be considered after all other options have been explored. Reference was also made to the DGT vision. This aims to promote sustainable transport modes and alternatives to travel by car. As explained above HIF1 is an integral part of the LTCP. The objectors consider that there is potential at Didcot to create an attractive environment and effective transport system meeting the environmental imperatives.[12.9,14.35]

17.158. POETS contend that the current planning system is an obstacle, not an opportunity, to achieving sustainable development goals and combat climate change effectively. Their view is that a radical approach to transport planning in southern Oxfordshire is urgently needed to address the challenge of climate change. They are concerned that permission for

HIF1 does not simply mean that this particular road will be built, but that the very large sum of public money funding this scheme will be diverted from the provision of sustainable transport.[12.10,12.11.12.12]

17.159. POETS position is that the urgency of climate change must affect the weight given to all historic and out-of-date plans and to applications that fall to be determined in accordance with S38(6) where overriding weight should be given to climate impacts. Mr Turnbull also considers the Local Plans to be out-of-date. He believes them to be superseded by LTCP and states that limited weight should be given to the housing requirements within the Local Plan. [12.15 13.5]

17.160. Planning law requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is one such material consideration, but it is clear that the development plan remains the starting point for decision making. Even where some policies within a plan are out-of-date that does not render the entire plan out-of-date.

17.161. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which local plans can provide for sufficient housing and other development in a sustainable manner and must be taken into account in preparing the development plan. It is also a material consideration in planning decisions. The need to mitigate and adapt to climate change is a key environmental objective of the NPPF. Chapter 14 in particular sets out Government Policy on Climate Change for planning. Amongst other matters, the NPPF requires new development to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change and to help to reduce GHG emissions.

17.162. The HIF1 Scheme complies with both of these requirements, as well as the relevant development plan policies. Therefore there is no legitimate basis in the context of this appeal for reducing the weight to be afforded to the development plan policies, or considering a reduced housing requirement. The LTCP is not part of the statutory development plan, but is a statutory document, required under the Transport Act 2000. Whilst it is a material consideration to be taken into account in planning decisions and also in respect of the emerging JLP it does not supersede the statutory development plan. Moreover, I have found no conflict between the LTCP and the relevant development plan policies.

17.163. Mr Tamplin, on behalf of POETS stated that there is no cogent basis for the delivery of a sufficient supply of houses in this area. The housing requirement in the Local Plans was tested at the time of the Examination and found to be sound. In the case of the SOLP the Inspector specifically considered whether the housing requirement should be reduced to take into account of climate change. He found that:

> "The Council's declaration of a climate emergency, and indeed the general issue of the relationship between human activity and climate, do not justify any reduction in the housing requirement in the Plan."[471]

There is no evidence to suggest that failing to meet the housing needs of the District would assist with addressing climate change. I agree with the SOLP inspector that climate change concerns do not justify a reduction in housing delivery.

17.164. HIF1 includes mitigation measures to minimise the effects of carbon emissions, together with measures to ensure resilience to climate change. During construction the Scheme would make a minor contribution to carbon emissions but would have a negligible impact on the Government's overall carbon budget for that period. During operation there would be a minor beneficial effect on emissions. I find that HIF1 would comply with the NPPF and SOLP Policy DES 8 in terms of climate change. Climate change considerations do not indicate that less weight should be afforded to the adopted development plans or that the housing requirements within them should be reduced.

The Effect of the Scheme on Noise

17.165. Development Policy 23 of the VWH LLP2 aims to safeguard amenity, whilst Development Policy 25 requires noise generating development that would have an impact on environmental amenity or biodiversity to provide an appropriate scheme of mitigation. Policy ENV12 of the SOLP similarly seeks to avoid adverse impacts on human health, whilst Policy DES6 seeks to safeguard amenity. Mr Butler, on behalf of VWH, concluded that the Scheme is compliant with policies DP23, DP25 and criterion v) of CP33 which seeks to minimise impacts on amenity. [8.31]

17.166. The NPPF requires the potential adverse impacts resulting from noise arising from new development should be mitigated and reduced to a minimum. Proposals should avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life. PPG sets out more detailed guidance that broadly reflects NPSE and the Explanatory Note, including having regard to whether or not a significant adverse effect is occurring or is likely to occur.[472] It also states that in line with the Explanatory Note of NPSE this would include identifying whether the overall effect of the noise exposure is, or would be, above or below SOAEL or LOAEL.

17.167. The noise and vibration impact of the Scheme were reported in Chapter 10 of the ES and revised in April 2023 following a Regulation 25 request for the LPA.[473] The assessment considered whether the change in noise level would give rise to a SOAEL. The significance of change in

[471] CD G.18 paragraph 51
[472] PPG Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 30-003-20190722
[473] CD C.1 Annex 4

accordance with DMRB, which assesses the magnitude of change.[474] These assessments were made for both construction and operation.

17.168. The noise assessment identifies two NIAs for road noise and one for rail noise. The two road noise NIAs are located on the A415 in Clifton Hampden to the west of the junction with Watery Lane and on the A34 to the south of the junction with the A4130 at Milton Interchange. Responsibility for mitigating noise at these locations rests with the relevant highway authority. The rail NIA encompasses two houses at the southern end of Appleford and is the responsibility of the DfT and the rail operator.[6.108]

17.169. Predicted monthly noise levels during the construction phase have been calculated over the Scheme construction period, taking into account applicable embedded mitigation measures. These are defined within the OEMP (CD A.17 Appendix 4.2) for the Scheme to minimise adverse impacts.[475]

17.170. During construction significant adverse daytime construction noise effects are identified at the closest receptors to the construction works on the existing A4130 (R1, R3 and R4), the existing minor access road between the A4130 on the northern edge of Didcot and the southern edge of Appleford (R6, R7 and R8), close to the Culham Science Centre (R17 and R18) and the north-east edge of Clifton Hampden (R20). Significant evening and night-time construction noise effects are more widespread along the Scheme and relate to tie-in works and bridge works at the new Didcot Science Bridge and Appleford rail sidings bridge.[6.102]

17.171. There is potential for additional attenuation of noise from construction activities to be achieved through the use of localised temporary site hoardings or noise barriers. BS 5228 advises that such barriers can provide a reduction in noise levels of 5 dB when the top of the plant is just visible over the noise barrier, and 10 dB when the plant is completely screened from a receptor. In addition, the duration of these works is limited. At some locations the duration is anticipated to be below the DMRB criterion of 10 or more working days (or evenings/weekends or nights) in any 15 consecutive days. There is also potential for some of the tie in works to be carried out during the daytime.[6.103]

17.172. OCC states that once a contractor has been appointed and specific details of the construction works are available, the construction noise assessment will be revisited. The NVMP required by the CEMP will set out how the requirement to adopt best practicable means has been met through the choice of working methods and plant, and, where appropriate, site hoarding. Where exceedances of the SOAEL are larger,

[474] *The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) LA 111 (Revision 2)*
[475] CD A.17 Appendix 4.2

the provisions of the noise insulation and temporary re-housing policy may apply.[6.103]

17.173. The traffic noise impact of construction traffic onto the local road network has been assessed and compared to both the 2020 Baseline and the 2024 Do-Minimum scenarios. The assessment of the addition of construction traffic onto the local road network is based on estimated construction traffic for the busiest month of the construction works for each of the 41 selected links.

17.174. The assessment indicates that the anticipated increase in traffic noise levels along existing roads during the busiest month of the construction works is negligible (< 1.0 dB) at 40 of the 41 selected links. The results indicate that no significant adverse traffic noise effects are anticipated due to the addition of construction traffic to the existing local road network. [6.103]

17.175. In terms of operational noise, the first aim of the NPSE is to avoid significant adverse effects on health and quality of life, which occur at noise levels above the SOAEL. The alignment of the Scheme has sought to minimise any potential increase in noise levels. The Didcot to Culham River Crossing section of the Scheme was relocated further west, away from Appleford and Zouch Farm, compared with the proposed alignment consulted on in 2018. The eastern end of the Clifton Hampden Bypass section of the Scheme was relocated slightly further north away from the village and the speed limit reduced from 60 mph to 50 mph. In addition, the originally proposed farm access underpass was replaced with an at-grade priority junction which allows the alignment of the Scheme to be constructed at a lower level. Noise barriers, solid bridge parapets and low noise surfacing have been included within the Scheme.[476]

17.176. The noise assessment has identified that in the opening year of 2024:

- 153 properties would experience road traffic noise levels above the SOAEL both with and without the Scheme. These are at residential buildings in close proximity to existing roads.

- 160 properties that would experience levels above the SOAEL in the opening year without the Scheme would no longer do so with the Scheme in place, i.e., the Scheme would avoid these effects. These are located in close proximity to existing roads, which are bypassed by the Scheme.

- 11 properties are predicted to experience road traffic noise levels above the SOAEL with the Scheme in place, where they would not do so without the Scheme. [6.107]

17.177. For operational noise the Scheme is anticipated to result in reductions in traffic noise levels along existing roads that are bypassed

[476] See Figure 10.1 for locations

by the Scheme, including at individual properties along the existing minor roads to the east and west of the Scheme through the villages of Sutton Courtenay, Culham and Long Wittenham, and the A415 east of Culham Station and the A415 and B4015 in Clifton Hampden. In addition, the Scheme results in a reduction in traffic noise along the A415 to the east of Clifton Hampden through the village of Burcot, and in the centre of Appleford at facades of properties facing onto the B4016, both of which experience a reduction in traffic with the Scheme in operation. [6.104]

17.178. The assessment found that more properties experienced a reduction in noise level rather than an increase. With 1,862 residential properties predicted to experience a minor, moderate or major decrease in the short term (341 in the long term) compared with 187 an increase (181 in the long term), based on the façade with the greatest magnitude of change.[477][6.104]

17.179. Of the 11 properties where noise levels are anticipated to increase above SOAEL as a result of the Scheme, most are located on existing roads, not close to the Scheme, where noise levels are already close to or above the SOAEL.

- Seven are located on the existing A4130 away from the Scheme in Didcot, where small (negligible) changes take these properties from just below to just above the SOAEL.
- One is located on the existing A415 towards Abingdon, away from the Scheme, and a small (negligible – not significant) change takes this property from just below to just above the SOAEL.
- Hill Farm and Hartwright House located to the east and west of HIF1 north of the Collett roundabout between Didcot and Appleford are the only two properties that may qualify for noise insulation works under the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975.[478]

17.180. When the significance of change is assessed in accordance with DMRB, 746 residential properties and 10 non-residential sensitive receptors, a significant beneficial effect was identified.[6.104]

Appleford

17.181. The ES identified that there will be some adverse noise and vibration effects (including some significant effects) at receptors (R8,R9,R10) in Appleford during construction, but they will be temporary, and Best Practicable Means of Construction will be employed to reduce impacts as far as practicable. The suggested conditions include a requirement to install noise monitoring equipment at Appleford to ensure compliance with the CEMP.[6.103]

[477] CD C.1 Annex 4 paragraphs 10.10.29 and 10.10.35
[478] Mr Pagett POE paragraph 4.13

17.182. All properties within Appleford which would experience noise levels above the SOAEL without the Scheme in the opening year are predicted to no longer do so with the Scheme in place. No new exceedances of the SOAEL due to the Scheme are identified within Appleford. This would be a beneficial effect of the Scheme.[6.108]

17.183. There are 19 properties in Appleford where traffic noise levels are between the LOAEL and SOAEL, but significant increases are predicted. Whilst the reduction in traffic through the centre of Appleford results in major decreases in traffic noise levels on the eastern facades, the introduction of the Scheme results in minor, moderate or major increases on the west facades at these properties. Mitigation in the form of low noise surfacing on the Scheme and a 3-metre barrier along the Scheme is proposed in the vicinity of this location. [6.108]

17.184. Mitigation in the form of low noise surfacing on the Scheme and a 3-metre barrier along the Scheme is proposed in the vicinity of this location. The applicant considered increasing the height of the barrier to 4 metres, but the additional benefit was about 1dB. It was therefore concluded that a 3 metre high barrier represented an appropriate balance between noise and landscape/visual impacts. The suggested conditions include an assessment of whether locating the noise barrier closer to the carriageway for non-motorised users would further limit noise. [6.108]

17.185. A further standalone property to the south of the village was identified as experiencing a significant adverse effect due to increased traffic noise levels on the west elevation (but in contrast, no similar magnitude decrease to the east). The NIA only encompasses only one building on Main Road which is the closest to the rail sidings, and the NIA relates to rail noise only. The Scheme is unlikely to adversely affect rail noise.[6.108]

17.186. The first aim of the NPSE is to avoid significant adverse effects on health and quality of life. During the operation of the Scheme, these occur at noise levels above the SOAEL. Of the 11 properties that are likely to experience noise levels above SOAEL with the Scheme in place, the greatest increase in noise would be 1.2dB. In general, a 3dB increase in sound is necessary for it to be noticeable. I therefore find that the first aim of the NPSE is met.[6.107]

17.187. The second aim of the NPSE is to mitigate and minimise adverse impacts of noise on health and quality of life. In addition to the embedded mitigation in the design and alignment of the Scheme, additional mitigation (in the form of noise barriers and low noise surfacing) is proposed and would be secured by conditions. The NVMP will minimise impacts during construction. I therefore find that the second aim of the NPSE is met.[6.103,6.108]

17.188. The third aim of the NPSE is to contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life. The Scheme would result in a reduction in

traffic noise levels along existing roads bypassed by the Scheme, including Appleford, Clifton Hampden, and Sutton Courtenay. Significantly more properties are predicted to experience a decrease in traffic noise levels rather than an increase in both the short and long term. On this basis I conclude that the third aim of NPSE has been met. And that the Scheme would comply with NPPF paragraph 185 and PPG.[6.104]

17.189. NPCJC believes that the traffic modelling is flawed and consequently the assessments that are reliant on it are also flawed. As explained above, I find the modelling to be robust. Dr Jones pointed out that some of Appleford is downwind of the Scheme. OCC confirmed that this is accounted for in the modelling.[6.108,11.76]

17.190. Dr Jones also raised concerns regarding the number of HGVs that may use the Appleford Sidings Bridge. Ms Currie's confirmed that the traffic modelling takes account of HGV movements and the traffic noise predictions which are based on the traffic modelling similarly provides for the percentage of HGVs likely to use it.[6.108,11.80]

17.191. NPCJC are concerned that the proposed concrete tunnel and embankment walls at Appleford sidings would reflect noise toward the nearby dwellings. Ms Scott, on behalf of the appellant, explained that the proposed structure was a bridge with open sides, which together with the length of the structure would avoid any significant amplification of noise.[6.108,11.79]

17.192. Mr Hancock, contended that in order to fully assess the impacts on Appleford a cumulative assessment of noise, including rail noise, was necessary. Ms Scott explained that the rail noise was not used in the assessments since it was intermittent and would therefore be likely to dilute the modelled impact of the Scheme. She further explained that when considering cumulative noise it was not a case of adding the two figures together. She submitted a technical note (INQ 70) that explained that the closer the figures were to each other the greater the increase in terms of cumulative effect.[479][11.78]

Clifton Hampden and Nuneham Courtenay

17.193. Noise Impacts in Clifton Hampden are summarised in Table 10.4 of the ES, which notes that 7 properties in Clifton Hampden are likely to experience a significant adverse traffic noise effect due to the Scheme compared with 96 receptors predicted to experience a significant benefit. As explained above, these would remain below SOAEL.

17.194. Noise impacts in Nuneham Courtenay are not specifically referred to in the ES. The village sits outside of the initially defined study area for the operational noise assessment. NPCJC consider the Scheme would give rise to significant adverse noise impacts at Nuneham Courtenay that have not been assessed. As discussed above in relation to the traffic

[479] For instance 55 dB(A) + 55 dB(A) would give an overall noise level of 58 dB(A)

modelling, whilst there would be an increase in traffic through Nuneham Courtenay, this would not be a consequence of the Scheme. The traffic flows at Nuneham Courtenay in 2024 and 2034 are 2% and 6% respectively above that without the Scheme. Ms Scott explained that if all other factors are unchanged there would need to be a 25% increase in traffic flow to cause a 1dB increase in noise and a doubling in traffic flows to cause a 3dB increase, which is the level required for the change to be perceptible. [6.108,11.80]

Fullamoor Farmhouse

17.195. Fullamoor Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building located adjacent to the existing A415. The Scheme would move the traffic further from the dwelling and the existing road would be stopped up. The occupant of Fullamoor Farmhouse is concerned that due to the Scheme there would be a significant increase in traffic and potentially noise, that would be difficult to mitigate since the property is a listed building.[15.69,15.70]

17.196. In the opening year the noise assessment identifies a beneficial decrease in noise levels ranging from minor to major depending on the façade/floor. Therefore, the additional traffic using the road would not harm the significance of Fullamoor Farmhouse.

Noise Conclusion

17.197. Overall, I find that the noise impacts have been properly assessed in accordance with the relevant guidance, and the traffic modelling on which the assessments rely are robust. The impact of the Scheme would be beneficial for most properties. Notwithstanding the proposed mitigation, 19 properties at the south end of Appleford are identified as experiencing a likely significant adverse effect due to increases in traffic noise levels on the west elevations (facing the Scheme).[480] Traffic noise at these properties would however remain between LOAEL and SOAEL, thus complying with NPSE. Whilst there would be a reduction in noise on the façade facing the road, the increase in noise would be experienced in the gardens to these dwellings and this would be additional to the existing intermittent noise from the railway. Notwithstanding the proposed mitigation measures there would be some harm to the living conditions of these residents arising from the Scheme.

17.198. The Scheme would be compliant with paragraph 191 of the NPPF in that it would mitigate and reduce to a minimum the potential adverse impacts resulting from noise due to the Scheme. There would however, be some adverse impacts as a consequence of the Scheme. These include the properties at the south end of Appleford and the 11 properties that would experience noise at levels of above SOAEL, although all but 2 of these properties already experience levels close to SOAEL. In this regard the Scheme would fail to comply with VWH Policy

[480] For the purposes of the assessment a significant adverse effect includes minor, moderate and major changes.

23, however, as acknowledged by Mr Butler on behalf of VWH it would comply with Policy 25 and Policy CP33 as a consequence of the mitigation proposed. I conclude that whilst some properties would experience an adverse effect due to noise, the Scheme as a whole would have a positive effect on noise in that it would take traffic away from residential receptors and significantly reduce the numbers of properties exposed to higher levels of traffic noise. I therefore conclude that the Scheme is acceptable in terms of its impact on noise.

The Effect of the Scheme on Air Quality

17.199. The air quality assessment methodology is outlined in Section 6.4 of the ES. The assessment considered impacts during the construction and operation of the Scheme to determine the overall significance of impacts of the Scheme on selected sensitive receptors. The assessment was conducted in accordance with the methodology and guidance set out in the National Highways DMRB LA105 Air Quality and technical guidance issued by Defra at the time of assessment (LAQM.TG16).[6.110]

17.200. The air quality assessment predicts oxides of nitrogen (NOx), NO_2 and PM_{10} concentrations during construction and operation at representative sensitive receptors located within 200m of the Scheme or roads affected by wider changes in traffic. The results are summarised in Table 6.15 and provided for all assessed receptors in Table 2 of Appendix 6.2 and in Figure 6.4 of the ES.

17.201. The modelling assessment was conducted for a baseline year of 2019 and an opening year of 2024 with and without the Scheme in place and for a situation during peak construction in 2023. Traffic data was provided by OCC's transport consultants and included annual average daily traffic flows, period flows, the percentage of heavy-duty vehicles and average vehicle speeds with speed bands for each road link in the model.

17.202. In November 2023, a new version of Defra's Vehicle Emissions Factors Toolkit was released and in January 2024, National Highways issued an update to its modelling tools based on this new information. To consider the effect of this update the air quality models were re-run. The results were similar to those reported in the ES for NO_2 and PM_{10}. The update also allowed $PM_{2.5}$ to be modelled. [6.112,6.114]

17.203. The nearest AQMAs to the Scheme are in Abingdon (around 3.5km north west of the Scheme), Oxford City AQMA (5km to the north) and Wallingford AQMA (8.5km to the south east). These areas were declared due to the exceedances of the NO_2 annual mean objective. Measured concentrations of NO_2 within the Abingdon AQMA are declining. The latest data from SODC and VWH show that there has been compliance with the annual mean objective within the AQMA for the last three years.[6.114]

17.204. Monitoring data from SODC and VWH demonstrates that measured NO_2 concentrations declined year on year between 2014 and 2019.[481] More recently the Councils' joint 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) found that there were no exceedances on NO_2 objectives within South Oxfordshire or Vale of White Horse. In terms of particulate matter, it was found that within the AQMAs, PM_{10} levels remain below 25 µg/m3 compared to a national objective of 40 µg/m3.[6.112]

17.205. The Scheme has the potential for adverse air quality effects during construction. However, any effects on human health related to air quality would be temporary (i.e. during the period of the construction works only). The applicant considers that such impacts could be suitably minimised by the application of industry standard mitigation measures as part of the CEMP. The recommended conditions include the submission of the CEMP that would include a dust management plan to reduce, mitigate and monitor construction dust and air quality effects.[6.111]

17.206. During operation it is intended that the Scheme would reduce congestion between Clifton Hampden and Milton Interchange with a focus on the A4130 and Didcot Town. It would thus reduce emissions by reducing the number of idling or slow-moving vehicles in heavy traffic. The applicant therefore expects that there will be reductions in annual mean concentrations of NO_2, NOx and PM_{10} within these locations due to the Scheme.[6.114,6.115]

17.207. All receptors are predicted to experience concentrations of PM_{10} below the objective value of 40µg/m3 in the base year, with a maximum concentration of 18.8µg/m3. Based on these values of PM_{10}, the ES judged that $PM_{2.5}$ levels would also be below the relevant objective value of 25µg/m3.[482] Following the Defra update the model was re-run and predicted that with the Scheme in place the maximum concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ across all selected existing receptors was 10.6 µg/m3.[6.112,6.114]

17.208. With the Scheme in operation the highest predicted annual mean NO_2 concentration in 2024 at an existing property would be 24.5 µg/m3 at receptor R13 to the north of Sutton Courtenay. However, this represents a reduction of 3.7 µg/m3 by comparison with the do nothing scenario. An imperceptible change in annual mean NO_2 concentrations was predicted at just over a third of the receptors modelled. Improvements in annual mean concentrations were projected at around half of the selected sensitive receptors, including those close to the A4130, south east Didcot, the Science Bridge, Sutton Courtenay, Culham, Appleford and Clifton Hampton. There were increases in concentrations at 16 selected receptors close to the new road at the southern end of Appleford, Clifton Hampden and Little Baldon.[6.112]

[481] ES Chapter 6 Tables 6.8 & 6.9

[482] ES Chapter 6 paragraph 6.10.11

17.209. The Environment Act 2021 came into force following the publication of the ES. It includes a national long-term target for annual mean $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations to meet a value of 10 µg/m3 by 2040. The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 outlines how the Government aims to achieve this target as this is a national responsibility rather than a local requirement due to the large contribution of $PM_{2.5}$ from background sources.[483] [6.114]

17.210. Background levels of $PM_{2.5}$ were already below or around the long-term target of 10 µg/m3 in 2019 and modelled predictions from the updated sensitivity test shows that the highest concentration at a receptor close to the road was 10.6 µg/m3 in the 2024 opening year. Recent monitoring by VWH District Council in 2022 shows levels were below this target in Marcham (Table 3 of the ASR). The nearest national monitoring sites run by Defra are in Oxford city centre and levels in 2023 were also below the target. Therefore, it is very likely that as concentrations continue to decline, the new national target would be met by 2040 throughout the study area.[6.114]

17.211. The ASR shows that air quality continues to improve and that there are now three years of compliance with the NO_2 annual mean Air Quality Strategy objective in the Abingdon, Marcham, Henley and Watlington AQMAs from 2020-2022. As there are 5 years of compliance in the Wallingford AQMA, the Council plans to revoke the AQMA in 2024.[6.112]

17.212. Mr Hancock, on behalf of NPCJC, considered that the predicted air quality values derived from the modelling do not reflect local values. He stated that there were insufficient measurements to provide confidence that the model could be relied upon. As confirmed by Ms Savage, on behalf of the applicant, the air quality model was verified and outputs adjusted to take account of the differences of the model to monitored concentrations (including sites within Appleford) to provide greater confidence in the results. She explained that baseline monitoring was undertaken at 27 sites, including 4 within 1 km of Appleford and used to verify the model. The results of the model verification showed that the performance of the model varied across the network, for example, the model was found to perform particularly well at monitoring sites along the A4130 dual carriageway. Following the review of the results at all monitoring sites, two model adjustment factors were calculated, one was applied to the majority of the road network (zone A which included Appleford) and the second (zone B) was applied to the A4130 dual carriageway specifically. [6.112,11.43,11.44]

17.213. NPCJC claimed that the Scheme contradicted the Council's current policy to lower emissions, reduce vehicle usage and establish homes and schools away from major roads. It was also concerned that higher traffic flows and speeds on the proposed road could lead to higher emissions and concentrations of pollutants. As I found above, the Scheme would reduce GHG emissions. The modelling on which the air quality

[483] INQ 71.1

assessment is based takes account of traffic flows and speeds, and therefore the matters raised by NPCJC do not alter the conclusions of the air quality assessment.

17.214. Within Appleford, the air quality assessment predicts that there would be improvements in NO_2 concentrations at residential properties close to the Main Road due to the Scheme, with some increases in concentrations predicted at properties near the railway line such as Hill Farm. Overall pollutant concentrations are low, and therefore none of these impacts were considered significant for health. Contributions from other non-road sources were taken account into the air quality model from modelled values from background sources as provided by Defra.[6.114]

17.215. NPCJC also submitted that the elevation and gradient of the Appleford Sidings bridge was not taken into account during the assessment. It was concerned that fully laden vehicles accelerating up the bridge would be likely to add to emissions. OCC carried out a sensitivity test and modelled air quality from vehicles using the bridge at elevations of 5m and 10m.[484] This showed that if the road was modelled at height, pollutant concentrations at the properties nearest to the Scheme would be lower due to greater dispersion from vehicle emissions. Ms Savage acknowledged that fully laden vehicles accelerating up the bridge may add to emissions and this was not taken into account in the model. However, she also contended that this would be likely to be balanced against a reduction on emissions for those decelerating coming down the hill. Although NCPJC state that there is no evidence to support Ms Savage's view, equally there is no evidence that vehicles accelerating up the bridge would have a significant effect on the emissions. Moreover, even if emissions have been underestimated due to the gradient of the bridge, they would remain well below the target figure.[6.114,11.44]

17.216. At the Inquiry, Mr Hancock advised that the modelling results were not accepted by NPCJC, since they relied upon the traffic modelling, which they considered to be flawed due to its failure to take account of induced traffic. NPCJC also consider that the over-reliance on the expected reduction in village traffic has skewed the air quality assessment, unbalancing the assessment of harms against benefits. As I have found above there is no substantive evidence to suggest that the modelling is flawed. No alternative modelling is suggested and induced and re-routed traffic is accounted for by the traffic model. Consequently, I find both the traffic and the air quality modelling to be sound.[11.47]

17.217. NPCJC consider that the exclusion of Nuneham Courtenay for the air quality modelling means that the ES does not demonstrate that the Scheme meets the Policy EP 1 Air Quality, Policy DES 6 Residential Amenity &, Emissions or ENV12 Pollution & Emissions of the SOLP. Whilst traffic flows through Nuneham Courtenay are anticipated to rise, as I found above, this is not a consequence of the Scheme which would

[484] CD B.2 Appendix 5

only marginally increase traffic flows through Nuneham Courtenay. As the traffic changes on the A4074 anticipated due to the Scheme were small and below the criteria, the air quality impacts on this road were scoped out of the assessment. Any change in pollutant concentrations due to traffic changes would be imperceptible. [6.114,11.46]

17.218. During construction the Scheme would incorporate best practice in the design, construction and operation of the development to minimise air pollution. These measures would be secured by the CEMP and would comply with SOLP Policy EP 1 and Policy DES 6 that seeks to safeguard residential amenity. It would also comply with paragraph 192 of the NPPF and Policy EP1 which require proposals to sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants. The Scheme would also help to improve air quality in accordance with the NPPF through the provision of an active travel network and improvements to sustainable transport. I conclude that the proposal would be acceptable in terms of its effect on air quality.

Whether the effect of the proposal on health would be acceptable

17.219. Paragraph 191 of the NPPF requires planning decisions to ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health. It requires potential adverse impacts resulting from noise to be mitigated and reduced to a minimum.

17.220. Dr Jones, on behalf of NPCJC, stated that the applicant has failed to submit a HIA as required by Public Health England. She contends that a number of matters that should have been included in a HIA have not been addressed by the ES. [11.85].

17.221. The applicant's position is that prior to the adoption of the LTCP in 2022 after submission of the application in 2021, there was no requirement for a separate HIA to be undertaken for major infrastructure schemes. The applicant also contends that for schemes above the EIA threshold, the ES can serve the function of a HIA. This position is supported by guidance from Public Health England. [6.16]

17.222. The main adverse health effects of roads are due to air pollution and noise. These matters have been considered above and were assessed in chapters 6 and 10 of the ES. Chapter 13 of the ES assessed the effects on population and human health, whilst chapter 8 considered the landscape and visual impacts. A detailed route map showing how health matters have been considered, signposting to locations in the application documents where health matters have been considered was submitted to the LPA.[485] The Applicant and the LPA agree that the health impacts of the development have been properly assessed in the information in the ES and the updated clarification provided to the September Committee meeting.[5.3, 6.116]

[485] See Mr Maddox appendix AM2.6

17.223. Dr Jones contends that HIF1 would bring significant HGV traffic into the parishes of Appleford and Sutton Courtenay, which have been previously protected from such flows by the weight limits on their road. Whilst HGVs will use HIF1 including the Appleford Sidings bridge, the contribution of such traffic to noise and air quality has been taken into account in the modelling. The Scheme does not include amending the weight limits on existing roads.

17.224. Dr Jones contends that the provision of a bus stop and improved walking route within Appleford would not be a health benefit because it would be too far for many residents to walk. She also suggested that there is an existing off-road route between Appleford and Sutton Courtenay and therefore the walking route proposed would not be a benefit. Whilst the location of the proposed bus stops would be unlikely to be suitable for all residents of Appleford, for those inclined to walk, cycle or use public transport, it would provide a safer alternative route, that would be suitable throughout the year, including during periods of poor weather. I therefore agree with the applicant that this would be a benefit of the Scheme. The increased use of active travel would improve health, whilst the increased use of public transport could contribute to the improvement of air quality and reducing congestion.[8.20].

17.225. I conclude that the health impacts of the Scheme have been adequately addressed and the Scheme would comply with paragraph 191of the NPPF.

The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape, including any loss of trees and/or hedges

17.226. The effect of the proposal in landscape and visual terms has been the subject of a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA). Following the Regulation 25 requests amendments were made to the landscape masterplans and mitigation. The methodology and scope of the LVIA, including study area, viewpoints and visualisations were agreed with the landscape officers at the LPA, SODC and VWH. Mr James, on behalf of NPCJC, agreed that the methodology of the LVIA was appropriate and that the LVIA was comprehensive. He did not contest the assessments at year 1 but did dispute some of the year 15 assessments.[6.94]

17.227. The landscape harm arising from the proposal was one of the reasons the July Planning and Regulation Committee resolved to refuse planning permission. Following this resolution the applicant made a number of further amendments to the application with a view to addressing this reason for refusal. These changes included planting semi-mature trees at a number of locations to minimise the visual impacts at year 1. These locations were the Didcot Science Bridge, the Appleford Sidings Bridge, the CSC roundabout, and Clifton Hampden Conservation Area. In the light of these changes the LPA resolved that subject to conditions it no longer opposes the Scheme due to its impact on the landscape.[7.12]

17.228. The Scheme does not cross any designated landscapes. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape is some distance to the east of the Scheme and there would be no adverse landscape effects on the National Landscape. In terms of the visual assessment on views from the National Landscape, the effects are assessed as slight adverse. Much of the southern half of the Scheme lies within the VWH and would pass through urban areas and land identified as an Enterprise Zone (Site 23). The more rural part of the route between site 23 and the River Thames already accommodates a railway, rail siding, landfill and mineral extraction works and haul road. Overall, the landscape south of the river is heavily influenced and fragmented by existing road and rail infrastructure, industrial, commercial and mineral uses, and existing or former landfill sites. [6.83, 6.84,8.24,8.26]

17.229. National and development plan policies, including SOLP Policy ENV1 and Policy CP44 of the VWH LPP1, set out the need to protect the landscape from harmful development, together with the need for high quality design measures that respect the landscape and incorporate new green infrastructure. The DGTDP aims to prioritise green infrastructure, including tree lined streets within Didcot. This approach accords with Sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 131,135,136 and 180.[9.55]

17.230. SCNP Policy SC3 identifies a number of key views and vistas which it expects development to maintain or enhance. Of particular relevance to the appeal are views 7 (east towards Wittenham Clumps over agricultural land from Appleford Road) and 13 (east along the bridle path adjacent to the Millennium Common). The Scheme would be visible in these views and interrupt views across the open landscape including the view towards Wittenham Clumps. However, due to the distance and intervening vegetation the impact would be relatively minor.

17.231. The LVIA identifies that there will be some significant landscape and visual effects, but it is notable that these are relatively limited in extent and scale. In terms of landscape effects, the LVIA identifies significant (i.e. moderate adverse and large adverse) effects during construction and at operation year 1 at the site level and the LLCA level, including the Thames Floodplain LLCA around the Thames River crossing and the Clifton Hampden Farmland LLCA. The nature of the Scheme is such that these effects cannot be fully avoided or mitigated. By operation year 15, the proposed landscape planting will be established, and the earthworks would be better integrated into the underlying pattern of landform. The LVIA finds that by year 15 the extent of vegetation loss will be mitigated, and the perception of the Scheme will reduce. Jane Ash, on behalf of OCC, stated that after 15 years, the residual effects of HIF1 on landscape character would be limited to the site itself where it would have a residual moderate adverse impact.[6.85,9.56]

17.232. Ms Bowerman, on behalf of SODC stated that any road scheme proposed in the rural area (i.e. north of the River Thames) would have some adverse effect on character and appearance, and that this is

something that was anticipated through the inclusion of HIF1 in the SOLP, such that the conflict with Policy ENV1 is inevitable. She stated that this matter must be weighed against the benefits of the Scheme in the overall planning balance. Mr Butler expressed a similar view with regard to the VWH. [8.27,9.59]

17.233. Mr James on behalf of NPCJC stated that although OCC identified several large adverse landscape impacts in the section from Didcot via Culham to Clifton Hampden, it has sought to downplay their significance in that it is suggested that these effects are minimal at the scale of LLCAs. However, the large adverse landscape effects identified were limited to the construction period at Clifton Hamden Farmland LLCA.

17.234. I find that there would be some residual landscape impacts as a consequence of the Scheme, particularly in the Didcot to Culham part of the Scheme that passes through the more rural landscape of the Clifton Hampden Farmlands and the Thames floodplain LLCA. Such effects would generally be limited to those areas closest to the Scheme. The LVIA assesses the residual effects as minor adverse and moderate adverse respectively. I agree with this assessment.

17.235. Mr James also contends that the landscape assessment did not follow WebTAG guidance adequately. The WebTAG assessment referred to by Mr James is a 2018 assessment, labelled as preliminary. It was undertaken at an early stage and was brief and high level. The applicant relies on the more comprehensive LVIA, which follows the approach in the Landscape Institute's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) and was the basis for the submitted viewpoints and photomontages. The approach to landscape assessment was agreed with the LPA as well as the two District Councils. On the basis of the evidence submitted to the Inquiry I am satisfied that the LVIA provides a satisfactory assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Scheme.[11.60]

17.236. Significant adverse visual effects are predicted during the Scheme construction from a number of viewpoints, largely located close to the Scheme. By year 1 the effects in relation to views around the former Didcot A Power Station, for users of PRoW 373/24 and the B4016, for road users between Sutton Courtenay and Appleford will have reduced. By operation year 15, the LVIA finds that residual significant effects occur at Appleford (viewpoint 10), on the Thames Path trail (viewpoints 18 – 21), at the entrance to the CSC (viewpoint 27), and around Clifton Hampden (viewpoints 31, 34, 36, 36a, and 37). These broadly accord with those identified on behalf of NPCJC. Of those residual effects, only at two viewpoints (19 and 20 close to the bridge on the Thames Path trail) is the effect large adverse, as opposed to moderate adverse [6.86,11.63]

17.237. The operational year 15 effects are considered to be permanent. For each of these receptors, either the Scheme cannot be effectively screened or integrated into views by planting, or even when the

proposed mitigation planting has established and matured, the planting will represent an adverse change to the view when compared to the baseline situation. The LVIA identified residual moderate or large adverse effects on visual amenity on 11 out of 48 representative viewpoints. The updated landscape masterplans were submitted after the LVIA was prepared. They included new planting across the Scheme. Whilst the LPA considered the revised design to be an improvement, the effects reported in the LVIA were unchanged.[9.56]

Appleford Sidings

17.238. Mr Hancock, on behalf of NPCJC, raised concerns about the impact of the sidings bridge on nearby residents. He submitted a series of slides (INQ 43) to illustrate the impact on the dwellings in Appleford that would be closest to the Scheme. Mr Hancock explained that his images are taken from a model created to inform residents in order that they could understand the relationship between the road and Appleford. The applicant submitted plans showing a cross section of the bridge, the location and height of the existing vegetation and the distance of the road from the boundary of the closest properties, and the change in levels (INQ49).

17.239. Whilst Mr Hancock's images are helpful in explaining the harm that NPCJC perceive to arise from the sidings bridge the reliability of the images is limited by two factors. The first is they do not show the existing trees that are to be retained and the additional woodland planting proposed. Mr Hancock's contention that these trees will be lost is incorrect. The applicant's plans show the extent and height of the existing trees. These are about 17 metres high close to the level crossing and 12 metres high further to the north. Excluding these substantial tree belts from the submitted images significantly exaggerates the visual impact of the road on the dwellings closest to the Scheme.[6.89,11.59]

17.240. The second issue with the submitted images is that they show the position of the supporting structure for the bridge incorrectly. It is shown further to the south where there is less separation between the dwellings and the proposed road/bridge. Based on the applicant's plans (INQ 49) the nearest part of the structure is at chainage 1200 which is north of the dwellings numbered 7 and 8 on the plans, whereas Mr Hancock's plan shows the bridge structure closer to chainage 1100. Whilst I am satisfied that this was likely to be an unintentional error, it does question the accuracy of some of the images, including the view from the bedroom window. [6.90]

17.241. At the southern end of Appleford where the closest property benefits from a wide side garden, and the proposed road would be about 2.5m higher than the existing road at this point with an additional 3 m added by the noise barrier. I visited the property at the time of my site visit. The dwelling is located close to the boundary with the railway line. Due to the parking arrangements to the side of the house the part of the

rear garden available for recreation is fairly shallow and it would be separated from the road by about 61 m. Due to the intervening tree belt views of the road would be largely screened. The supporting structure for the bridge may be visible in views to the north, since the property is located close to the junction with the sidings, but such views must be seen in the context of the location of this property adjoining the railway line and close to the existing sidings.

17.242. In terms of the other properties to the north those closest to the structure would be about 77m from it. At this point the bridge would be at its highest level at about 7 m above existing ground level with a further 3 m due to the noise barrier. The trees in this location are about 12 m in height so would provide some screening. However, they are deciduous trees and whilst they may provide significant screening during the summer months, at the time of my visit they were not in leaf and in winter months would be more likely to filter rather than screen views of the road. Moreover, it is proposed to provide lighting to the siding bridge and although the impact of the lighting on residents and the wider landscape can be managed and minimised by way of a suitable condition it is likely to be noticeable during winter months thereby adding to the harm. [6.88]

17.243. I conclude that the Scheme would give rise to visual harm to the dwellings in this part of Appleford The harm would be mitigated by the existing tree belts and would be relatively localised. It would however remain at year 15 and would be contrary to Policy CP44. This harm must be weighed in the overall planning balance.

Thames Path National Trail

17.244. LVIA viewpoints 18, 19, 20 and 21 show the views from the Thames Trail. In the more distant views (viewpoints 18 and 21) the bridge would remain visible at year 15, but would be seen as an element of the wider landscape. I agree with the LVIA assessment of moderate adverse. [6.92]

17.245. Viewpoints 19 and 20 are located close to the bridge. This is one of the locations where the applicant proposes the introduction of semi-mature trees. Whilst these trees would not overcome the harm, they would assist with mitigation during the early years. Although the proposed planting would provide some screening, the Scheme would form a prominent and intrusive feature within the landscape and the harm would remain and the applicant acknowledges that from these viewpoints there would be a large adverse effect even at year 15. [6.92]

Clifton Hampden Bypass

17.246. The LVIA found that the impact on LLCA 16 would reduce from large adverse during construction to slight adverse in year 15. Mr James considers this to be questionable since the main impact is the loss of tranquility. He also doubts whether the adverse effects would be offset

by the removal of traffic in the village. Mr James does not dispute the visual effects of the Clifton Hampden bypass which are assessed as moderate adverse by year 15. Whilst there would be some loss of tranquility in the part of Clifton Hampden closest to the Scheme, this would be significantly off-set by the removal of traffic from the core of Clifton Hampden. In my view due to the removal of traffic, together with the proposed mitigation in relation to noise and landscaping, the landscape effects of the Scheme would reduce to slight adverse by Year 15. [6.93]

Bridge Farm Quarry

17.247. The proposed viaduct would cross the part-restored areas of Bridge Farm Quarry, which includes wetland habitat. The restoration scheme for Bridge Farm Quarry, will include a wetland vegetation mosaic made up of reedbeds and wet woodland, areas of standing water, and associated habitats including lake margins.

17.248. There has been some restoration of the gravel working through the introduction of wetland areas and lakes. These form an attractive feature within the former quarry landscape. At the present time there is no public access to these lakes. From Viewpoint 16 the viaduct would be visible, but would be seen in the context of the former quarry works. I agree that by year 15, with the woodland planting established, the visual impact from viewpoint 16 would reduce to slight adverse.[6.91]

17.249. NPCJC suggest that the LVIA underestimated the landscape value of this area. Ms Ash, on behalf of the applicant, accepted that the current sensitivity of this area (LLCA 9) would be higher than that assessed within the LVIA, due to the presence of the lakes and the now maturing wetlands. As a consequence she agreed that the landscape effect would be significant.[6.91]

17.250. There was no public access to this area at the time of the assessment and, therefore, no visual receptors identified or requested in this location. Access paths may be created in future following completion of the Scheme, but Ms Ash found that there would be significant adverse visual effects for recreational users. The currently approved restoration plan dated February 2024 shows only limited public access in the form of a small car park, a relatively short length of footpath and a bird hide, all located immediately adjacent to the alignment of the B4016. It is possible that the walking and cycling provision within the HIF1 would assist with providing public access in the future.[6.91]

17.251. Both District Councils raised concerns as to the extent of tree and hedgerow loss and consider that there is potential for a more ambitious landscape scheme. VWH is also concerned that the proposed acoustic barriers could be visually intrusive. Whilst it acknowledges that some of these matters could be resolved by an appropriate planning condition, it nonetheless considers the landscaping proposals to be a missed opportunity.

17.252. There would be a significant amount of tree loss initially. But OCC's Arboricultural Impact Assessment confirms that after 10 years the level of canopy cover within the site will be between 13 and 17%, compared with the baseline level of 14%.[6.96,6.97,6.98,9.58]

17.253. SODC welcomes the inclusion of some semi-mature trees in some locations. Mr James on behalf of NPCJC was critical of this offer. His view was that smaller trees tend to establish more successfully and that within 10 years the smaller trees planted will be similar in size to the semi-mature trees proposed. As explained in Ms Ash's Proof of Evidence and at the Inquiry, these trees would be located in the more sensitive areas with a view to reducing the visual effects at year 1. OCC acknowledge that by year 15 these trees would not reduce visual effects due to the time taken for vegetation to establish.

17.254. The Applicant also gave an undertaking to provide a £50,000 Landscaping Enhancements Fund for the local community to use more widely, but the Applicant makes clear that it considers that the Inspector and SoS should not place any weight on this matter in determining the application.[6.97]

17.255. Due to the nature of the proposals, landscape mitigation would not completely screen the development or prevent all landscape or visual harm. Planning conditions could assist with minimising harm and replacement trees and tree protection could minimise the visual impact of lighting and noise barriers. Conditions could also secure the CEMP and the LEMP.[8.28,9.57]

17.256. The Scheme would have an adverse effect on landscape character, particularly in the vicinity of the Thames floodplain LLCA. There would also be residual visual harm at year 15. Although landscaping would reduce these effects, they would remain significant and give rise to harm. Therefore there would be some conflict with Policy CP44 and Policy ENV1. This matter must be weighed in the overall planning balance.

Whether the proposed Science Bridge would deliver the high-quality design sought by the Framework and development plan policies

17.257. Policy CP37 of the VWH LPP1 seeks high quality design in accordance with paragraphs 131, 132 and 135 of the NPPF. Policy CP16b of the LPP2 requires proposals in the DGTMP area to demonstrate how they positively contribute to the Masterplan principles. Policy DES 1 of the SOLP provides that all new development must be of high-quality design, whilst Policy DES 2 requires development to physically and visually enhance and complement the surroundings and respond positively to the site and its surroundings.

17.258. The Didcot Science Bridge would consist of a new single carriageway passing over the existing A4130, the Great Western Mainline railway and Milton Road, landing in the former Didcot A Power Station

site. The bridge will be approximately 15m in width, including a segregated two-way cycle track and adjacent pedestrian path on the eastern side of the bridge, as an integral facility of the new road.

17.259. The LPA's view was that the bridge was not of an adequate design to form a gateway feature to Didcot. Concerns raised at the time the application was considered by the LPA included that the b4ridge had a functional appearance and the deign was led by engineering and safety considerations. There were also concerns about the appearance of the bridge and the absence of vertical landscaping. Mr Butler, on behalf of VWH, considered that the Science Bridge did not deliver the pioneering architecture sought by the DGTMP, whilst Ms Bowerman described it as a bit of a missed opportunity. In a pre-inquiry note the LPA stated that the external appearance of the bridge could be enhanced by way of a condition requiring details of materials to be submitted. [7.13,7.14]

17.260. Mr Blanchard, on behalf of OCC, explained that the Science Bridge had been designed in accordance with DMRB and in consultation with Network Rail. The design involved overcoming a number of engineering constraints, including crossing the electrified Great Western Mainline, and also the need to tie-in to the highway and the developments to the north and south and on the land available. These considerations influenced its final form. For these reasons, certain architectural enhancements would be unsuitable for the Didcot Science Bridge, largely because they would introduce potential health and safety risks and/or make carrying out routine structural inspections more challenging.

17.261. Mr Blanchard explained that certain architectural enhancements would be unsuitable for the Didcot Science Bridge, largely because they would introduce potential health and safety risks and/or make carrying out routine structural inspections more challenging. This includes cladding/façades and faux structural elements, such as arched beams suspended above the railway and/or highway, which would obscure structural elements of the bridge which then cannot be readily inspected. Both Mr Butler and Ms Bowerman acknowledged the technical and practical constraints on the design of the bridge. They both considered that the appearance of the bridge could be improved through planting on the embankments, and details in respect of colour, texture and green walls. these matters could be secured by conditions.

17.262. It is inevitable that design of a bridge in this location given the various constraints will be significantly constrained by engineering and safety requirements, particularly given the need to cross the railway and the proximity of the Power Station. OCC outlined a number of potential enhancements that may help to make the bridge appear more of a prominent/landmark feature including:

- Up-lighting, subject to Network Rail approval to ensure that there are no adverse effects on the railway operational safety.
- Cast-in textures on concrete substructures (i.e., pier columns and abutments) could add visual interest and an individual character to the

Science Bridge. The ends of the pier crossheads could also include architectural features.

- The internal faces of the solid bridge parapets could be used to showcase artwork contributed by local school children, with a science-led theme.

17.263. The proposed Didcot Science Bridge would have an attractive sinuous alignment. The grass ramps and landscaping that would include trees and shrubs, would help to integrate it within the landscape. The proposal to include a number of semi-mature trees at this location would allow it to integrate with its surroundings from Year 1.

17.264. Given the engineering constraints, any enhancement of the design will necessarily be limited to the materials used and the detailed design and height of the parapets, that in themselves are subject to safety and engineering constraints. There is limited scope to vary the height or alignment. Safety concerns will influence the design height and appearance of the parapets.

17.265. The concerns of the LPA focus on the external appearance of the bridge. The appearance of the wings to the embankment, the concrete columns, and parapets will all have a considerable impact on the final appearance of the bridge. I agree with the District Councils that matters such as the landscaping, design of the parapet and materials could all assist with improving the appearance of the bridge.

17.266. I find the alignment and general form of the bridge to be satisfactory. Recommended condition 8 would require the submission and approval of details of the external appearance of the bridge and provide an opportunity to ensure that the materials, finishes and colours used, as well as the landscaping would enhance the appearance of the Science Bridge. These details have the potential to elevate the design of the bridge from a largely functional structure to the high-quality design sought by the NPPF and development plan policies whilst also accommodating the engineering an safety constraints. I therefore conclude that subject to recommended Condition 8 the Science Bridge has the potential to deliver the high-quality design sought by the Framework and development plan policies.

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt, and if so, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the Scheme

17.267. Much of the site to the north of the Thames lies within the Green Belt. The land at CSC, and adjacent to it, was removed from the Green Belt in the SOLP to accommodate strategic allocations in these locations. While the HIF1 route is safeguarded within the SOLP it has not been removed from the Green Belt. The bridge over the River Thames together with the viaduct and embankment where the road lands on the

north bank of the river is within the Green Belt, as is the stretch of road leading to the new A415 junction and the Clifton Hampden bypass.

17.268. SOLP Policy STRAT6 seeks to protect the Green Belt fand restricts development to that deemed appropriate by the NPPF, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. The NPPF states that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

17.269. On behalf of the applicant, Mr Greep contends that the proposal falls within paragraph 155 c) of the NPPF and therefore is not inappropriate development. Paragraph 155 c) of the NPPF states that local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location is not inappropriate provided it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

17.270. SODC, the LPA, or NPCJC all consider the Scheme to be inappropriate development. They all accept that it is local transport infrastructure and SODC and the LPA both accept that the proposal can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location, since, in their view, the Scheme is necessary to mitigate the impacts of planned housing and employment growth.486 NPCJC maintain that a requirement for a Green Belt location can only be demonstrated if it was thought that there was no alternative to HIF1 as a way of releasing the sites needed for housing and employment. However, paragraph 153 of the NPPF is clear that it is the harm resulting from the proposal that should be assessed, and therefore it is not necessary to assess whether there may be any alternatives to the Scheme for the purposes of Green Belt policy within the NPPF. [9.39,11.49] [9.39,11.49]

17.271. Any road scheme linking Didcot to the Culham strategic sites and bypassing Clifton Hampden will inevitably have to pass through the Green Belt. I am therefore satisfied that the Scheme can demonstrate a need for a Green Belt location and would therefore comply with criterion c) of paragraph 155. Nonetheless the LPA and SODC consider that the Scheme would fail to preserve openness and would conflict with some of the purposes of the Green Belt so would conflict with paragraph 155 as a whole.

17.272. The applicant's position, as expressed by Mr Greep, is that NPPF paragraph 155 c) must mean that it is possible for some development to come forward within the Green Belt which, by extension, means that a degree of impact on openness can be tolerated. SODC do not dispute the logic of this approach but contend that where the 'tipping' point lies is a matter of planning judgement. Ms Bowerman judges that elements of the HIF1 scheme which lie within the Green Belt have impacts on openness and purposes which go beyond that tipping point. Mr Greep takes the opposite view. [9.41]

[486] This view was shared by the applicant at the time it submitted its Statement of Case

17.273. The applicant's landscape evidence, provided by Ms Ash, acknowledged that there would be landscape and visual harm to the Green Belt as well as a loss of openness and encroachment into the countryside. She found that the harm would be localised and would occupy a relatively small amount of the overall Green Belt and considered such effects to be inevitable in respect of a major infrastructure scheme such as that proposed.

17.274. Mr Greep maintained that the absence of any significant residual effects in landscape terms beyond the site by operational year 15 indicates that in spatial terms, any impact on openness is limited and that the significant residual effects in visual terms at year 15 are localised.

17.275. The proposed River Thames Crossing and Clifton Hampden Bypass would introduce new roads and footway/cycleways within an area of Green Belt that has a predominantly rural character. The bridge and its embankments, as well as the traffic using the Scheme would reduce the openness of the Green Belt, even by year 15. As acknowledged by the LVIA there would be remain significant landscape effects at site level, even at year 15. Whilst the visual effects would diminish by year 15 significant visual effects would remain at a number of Green Belt locations, including the Thames Path Trail, the entrance to the CSC, and around Clifton Hampden. close to Clifton Hampden. For two of the assessed viewpoints the effects would be large adverse even at year 15. [6.86]

17.276. Whilst I accept that the Scheme is local transport infrastructure and requires a Green Belt location, there can be little doubt due toits scale as well as its visual and landscape impacts that it would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

17.277. Mr Greep submitted a number of decisions in support of his position. It is evident that each decision exercised planning judgement taking account of the nature and scale of the proposed development, the context of the site and the specific circumstances involved. In my view none of the decisions are comparable with the Scheme in terms of location or scale. [6.150]

17.278. The Inspector Report in the Hinxton decision is clear that whilst some degree of impact on openness and/or Green Belt purposes does not mean that it is necessarily inappropriate, but that this is a matter of judgement for the decision-maker. Moreover, the scale of the Hinxton development proposed is substantially less (1.865 ha) by comparison with the Scheme under consideration (a permanent land take of 24.81 ha, with a further 7.78 required temporarily). I therefore do not consider them to be comparable.

17.279. Mr Greep also sought to justify the loss of openness on the basis that it would occupy a relatively small percentage of the South Oxfordshire Green Belt. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to

prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. This is not a matter that can be assessed by way of a mathematical calculation. Indeed, such an approach could be repeated many times over and ultimately lead to the erosion of the Green Belt.

17.280. NPPF Paragraph 155 also states that in order to be not inappropriate it must not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. I agree that the Scheme would not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt as set out in paragraph 143 a), b) or e) of the NPPF. It would however encroach on the countryside contrary to paragraph c). Whilst the Scheme is located within the vicinity of Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area and Clifton Hampden Conservation Area, I agree with the appellant that any harm to these conservation areas is at the low end of less than substantial harm. This would be insufficient to give rise to conflict with purpose (d) of paragraph 143.

17.281. Overall, I find that the Scheme does not come within the exceptions at NPPF paragraph 155 due to its impact on openness and the conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt as a consequence of its encroachment on the countryside. I therefore conclude that the Scheme would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The other considerations and whether they constitute very special circumstances are addressed within the planning balance below.

The effect of the proposal on the setting of and the significance of heritage assets

17.282. There are no designated assets within the Site. The ES identified five Scheduled Monuments, Nuneham Courtenay Registered Park and Garden, six conservation areas and 92 listed buildings within the study area. There are also a number of non-designated assets that could potentially be affected by the Scheme. The ES was supplemented by the Heritage Technical Note by Dr Gillian Scott on behalf of the Applicant, and the Further Heritage Technical Note by Dr Scott dated 9 February 2024.[6.142]

17.283. Paragraph 205 of the NPPF requires great weight to be given to an asset's conservation. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

17.284. As a result of the initial assessment of the significance of assets and the contribution made by setting to their significance, a number of assets were scoped out by the ES. These conservation areas are the Milton Conservation Area, the Sutton Courtenay Conservation Area, the Culham Conservation Area, the Didcot Old Town Conservation Area and the listed buildings within them. The rationale for scoping out these assets generally related to either the lack of potential for significant adverse effects requiring mitigation, or an assessment that the site did not form

part of the assets' settings.[487] The decision to scope them out was not challenged by the parties and on the basis of the evidence submitted to the Inquiry and within the ES, I agree that any impact of the Scheme on these conservation areas would not be significant in EIA terms.

17.285. The assessment also scoped out a number of other listed buildings. These are Scholaea Europa Grade II listed building, the bridge over railway at Appleford, Thame Lane Bridge, the Engine Shed and the Railway Transfer Shed, all Grade II listed buildings and the listed buildings within Appleford within the historic core of the settlement. The assessment found that there would be no intervisibility with the Site. In each case the assessment found that there was no intervisibility between the Site and the asset and that the Scheme would have no impact upon the significance of the asset. On the basis of the submitted information and my observations at the time of my site visits, I agree with this conclusion.

17.286. The Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment concluded that one scheduled monument, one registered park and garden, two conservation areas (and the designated and non-designated assets therein), three listed buildings and five non-designated assets had the potential for impact from the Scheme as a result of changes to their settings.[488]

17.287. Historic England does not object to this scheme on heritage grounds. It considers that the ES provides a reasonable assessment of significance of heritage assets and the predicted impacts on them.[15.7]

*Settleme*nt Site North of Thames

17.288. The new Thames crossing and the new road will be near to the scheduled monument known as Settlement Site North of Thames (HA1006345, A117 in the ES). The monument consists of the archaeological remains of enclosures, pits and trackways which are known from aerial photographs.

17.289. The significance of the scheduled monument lies in its evidential value and is also contributed to by its setting. The evidential value is the potential of the archaeological remains to contribute to our understanding of how people lived and worked the land in this area. The setting contributes in that the relationship of the river to the monument can be understood, and in the rural / agricultural land to the west and north which illustrates the original rural surroundings of the prehistoric and Roman features. To the east the setting is compromised by the railway embankment and bridge. There are modern quarries to the south of the river.

17.290. The Scheme would not change the evidential value of the monument. It would however introduce light pollution and traffic noise, as well as a visual presence and enclose the monument to the west. As a

[487] ES -Appendix 7.2. Table 5.10

[488] ES Appendix 7.2

consequence, the site would be enclosed on two sides by modern features thus impacting on its significance. The ES assessed the change to its setting from the Scheme as resulting in a slight adverse effect, whereas Historic England suggest that the effect would be moderate. Given the distance from the proposed bridge and the presence of the railway embankment the Scheme would be about 220 metres from the bridge that there would be a slight adverse effect. The Scheme would give rise to less than substantial harm to this monument and given the existing railway embankment and bridge such harm would be towards the lower end of the scale.

Clifton Hampden Conservation Area

17.291. The Scheme lies outside of the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area, but it falls within its setting as the northern approach to the conservation area. This approach currently has a leafy-green rural character, featuring a tree-lined and hedge-lined road (the B4015 Oxford Road) with open-aspect views between the trees across farmland that emphasises the rural setting of the conservation area.

17.292. The significance of the conservation area is drawn from its architectural and historical interest as an early-medieval settlement. The listed buildings also have architectural interest and provide such interest to the conservation area. The boundary of the conservation area includes the majority of the built form within the settlement, together with fields to rear of the buildings lining its main thoroughfares. This contributes to its character as a contained rural settlement. Open views across farmland emphasises the rural setting of the conservation area.

17.293. The Scheme would be located to the north-west of the conservation area and would encroach on its wider agricultural setting. The LPA consider that any adverse impacts on the significance of the conservation area due to increased urbanisation and the effect of lighting within its setting, would be mitigated through enhanced landscaping and acoustic mitigation.

17.294. The potential impacts on the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area are linked to the construction and presence of the Scheme within the setting of the conservation area and the operation of the Scheme including lighting, noise and changes in traffic volume.

17.295. The Clifton Hampden Bypass will take traffic away from the centre of the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area, thereby reducing traffic and noise within the core of the conservation area. This would improve understanding of the conservation area as a rural settlement and allow for greater appreciation of its architectural and historic interests, including those of its listed buildings.

17.296. There would be some harm to the setting of the conservation area through change to the rural character of its approach from the north until the mitigation planting matures. Whilst this would detract from the

significance of the conservation area, this temporary harm would be less than substantial at the low end of the scale. It would be fully mitigated once the screening planting has matured. I conclude that this short term, low level of harm to the setting of the conservation area would be outweighed by the benefit of removing traffic and the associated noise from its core. Overall, I conclude that the Scheme would preserve and enhance the character of the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area and once the landscaping has matured would have a positive effect on the character of the Conservation Area.

17.297. The significance of the listed buildings within the conservation area is drawn from their individual and collective historic and architectural interest as examples of vernacular building in the village. The restored Manor House and Clifton Hampden Bridge were designed Sir George Gilbert Scott, and the Church of St Michael and All Angels was also altered by Scott, as part of wider improvements he made to village to create the vision of a picturesque idyll of buildings in the landscape. These buildings are located in proximity with one another and have group value through this architectural association and through patronage.

17.298. The listed buildings within the conservation area are generally inward looking and views of them are generally contained defined by the conservation area boundary. Although there are views of the Church steeple to the north, the bypass will sit within a dip in the foreground with the view oversailing the bypass and screening planting, towards the steeple. Therefore, the Scheme would therefore not impact on the setting of the Church. The Scheme is also likely to reduce traffic using the Clifton Hampden Bridge. Overall, the Scheme would preserve the setting of the listed buildings within the Conservation Area. I conclude that in the short term the Scheme would cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the Conservation Area, this would be towards the lower end of the scale, and once the landscaping has matured the Scheme would have a beneficial effect on the significance of the Conservation Area through the removal of traffic.

Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area and listed buildings

17.299. Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area includes Nuneham Courtenay Registered Park and Garden (Grade I listed) and the dwellings either side of the A4074. The significance of the park and garden derives from its artistic and architectural interest as an example of an 18th century designed landscape, comprising a pleasure ground and parkland, together with an 19th century arboretum. The parkland has historical interest due to its association with the Harcourt family and their patronage of nationally significant architects and landscape architects to design the park and its buildings in several phases. Most notable amongst them is Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

17.300. The setting of the garden includes its siting, approaches and carriage drives, as well as any designed key views of, from and within

the garden. The 470ha estate is bounded to the west by the River Thames, and on the other sides largely by agricultural land and woodland which restricts long views into and out of the park on the east and southeast sides. The park and garden contain and provides the setting for, the 25 listed buildings within it.

17.301. The village of Nuneham Courtenay contains a further 25 listed buildings, all grade II, and dating to the establishment of the village in the 18th century when it was moved from within the park. The buildings line the road and face each other on opposing sides. The significance of the conservation area is its historical relationship with the park as well as the architectural and historic interest of the village.

17.302. The Site is outside the confines of the park and garden and the conservation area, in an area of agricultural land that forms part of their setting. It makes a limited contribution to significance through providing a green rural aspect and approach to the park and conservation area on its south and south-east side. Dense woodland along the south and south-east side of the designed park and garden, screens views inward and outward on this side.

17.303. The proposed lighting at the Clifton Hampden Bypass only includes the non-motorised user facilities and the southern roundabout. The lighting is proposed to be dimmed to 75% between 00.00 and 06.00. The lighting from the road may be seen from within the Grade I Nuneham Courtenay landscape albeit to a limited degree due to the existing woodland. The landscaping proposals indicate that the woodland planting to the east, south and north of the new road and connecting roads would provide further screening to limit light spill.

17.304. The Registered Park and Garden is a designated heritage asset, any harm to, or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, including from development within its setting, should require clear and convincing justification. I conclude that the Scheme would cause less than substantial harm to the Grade I Registered Park and Garden at Nuneham Courtenay. Such harm would be at the lowest end of the scale and would be largely mitigated by the proposed screening.

17.305. Both Professor Airs and Mr Hancock are concerned that the additional traffic may give rise to adverse structural effects on the Grade II listed cottages either side of the main road and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. As explained above, in relation to traffic modelling, noise and air quality, although there may be in increase in traffic through Nuneham Courtenay over time this would not be a consequence of the Scheme. For this reason, the Scheme would not give rise to adverse structural effects to the individual listed buildings within the conservation area, or harm to their setting.

17.306. Overall I conclude that the Scheme would fail to preserve or enhance the Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area as a consequence of

the change to its setting. This harm would be less than substantial and would be very limited. In accordance with NPPF paragraph 208 this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal

Fullamoor Farmhouse

17.307. Fullamoor Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building located to the south of the Scheme opposite the CSC. The significance of Fullamoor Farmhouse is drawn from its architectural and historical interest, as a good example of 17th and 18th century vernacular domestic architecture. The setting of the farmhouse includes the courtyard and garden, together with the agricultural landscape to the south, west and east. This contributes to an understanding of its former function as a farmhouse.

17.308. The Site lies within the land to the north of Abingdon Road that formerly formed part of the farmland associated with the farmhouse. However, this land is no longer farmland, having first been adapted for use as part of the airfield, and subsequently developed as CSC, and now reads as amenity landscaping associated with CSC.

17.309. The Scheme in the vicinity of the asset includes a new roundabout, to the north-west, to facilitate access to CSC and the realigned A415. There would also be a series of attenuation ponds. The existing A415 would become a cycleway and access lane to Fullamoor Farmhouse with the Scheme located to the north of the existing road. The construction and presence of the Scheme in the setting of Fullamoor Farmhouse would have a slightly urbanising effect due to the scale and type of the Scheme, but this takes place within a setting that has already been significantly changed.

17.310. Lighting along the existing A415, and at the entrance of the CSC is filtered by existing vegetation. Car headlights and taillights are visible along the existing A415, which is a fairly busy route. The addition of the operational lighting to this existing lighting would add to the urbanising influence to the north of the farmhouse. The Landscape Masterplan includes planting that aims to minimise the impact of the Scheme.

17.311. The Scheme would change the ability to understand the land to the north of Abingdon Road as formerly being part of the farmland associated with the farmhouse, however this is not something that is readily understandable at present due to the previous development of this land firstly as part of the airfield, and subsequently as CSC.

17.312. Overall, the Scheme would result in 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of Fullamoor Farmhouse, and such harm would be at the lower end of the scale.

Heritage Overall Conclusion

17.313. With the exception of Fullamoor Farmhouse, I have found that there would be no harm to the setting of the listed buildings as a consequence

of the Scheme. Therefore there would be some minor conflict with SOLP Policy ENV 7. The Scheme would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument A117, the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area, the Nuneham Courtenay Registered Park and Garden, Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area and Fullamoor Farmhouse. It would therefore be contrary to SOLP Policies ENV8, ENV 9 and ENV10. Where a Scheme gives rise to less than substantial harm, these policies reflect the guidance at paragraph 208 of the NPPF, namely that such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Other Matters

Bridge Farm Quarry

17.314. Mr James was also concerned that the Scheme, if approved would prevent delivery of the approved restoration scheme for Bridge Farm Quarry. The LPA shared this view and consider that it could have implications for compliance with Policy M10 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy, which requires mineral workings to be restored to a high standard and in a timely and phased manner.

17.315. If the SoS is minded to agree with my recommendation and grant planning permission it would be necessary for the planning permissions and associated S106 legal agreements for Bridge Farm Quarry to be formally amended with revised restoration and aftercare schemes. The LPA and applicant agree that this could be achieved through the submission of planning applications under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended. Recommended condition 27 precludes development within the Didcot to Culham River Crossing section of the Scheme until revised restoration and aftercare schemes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for Bridge Farm Quarry. This would ensure that a restoration scheme of a satisfactory standard is delivered in a timely manner.

Biodiversity

17.316. The effect of the Scheme on biodiversity was considered in ES Chapter 9: Biodiversity, which concluded that there would be no significant residual effects resulting from the construction or operation of the Scheme, with the implementation of mitigation measures. The assessment further concluded that the Scheme is expected to result in a slight positive effect in the medium to long term, once habitats have matured, as a result of the overall BNG. The LPA did not object to the Scheme on the basis of its impact on biodiversity.

17.317. The assessment comprised a desk top study and Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, Walkover Surveys and a series of detailed surveys for great crested newts, bats, hazel dormice, otters, water voles, badgers, birds, reptiles, and terrestrial invertebrates. The surveys identified potential impacts to common species of bat, otters, badgers, breeding

and wintering birds, common lizards and grass snakes, and terrestrial invertebrates. Mitigation measures in respect f these species would be secured through condition if planning permission is granted.

17.318. The applicant submitted a technical note to address biodiversity matters. Although a number of bat roosts were identified, it was found that none would be impacted either directly or indirectly by the Scheme and thus there is no necessity to apply to Natural England for any licence.[489]

17.319. About 19% (0.7ha) of the unnamed lake at the Appleford Siding would be lost and the viaduct piers will encroach into the finger lakes. These water bodies support European Eel, Bullhead and nine other fish species, and habitat will be lost for these species. Therefore, fish rescue, removal and translocation will be required during construction and prior to any draining of water bodies to ensure fish welfare and compliance with fisheries legislation. The European Eel is a critically endangered species and relocation would require consent from the EA and would be agreed in consultation with the local EA Biodiversity Team. Compensatory habitat creation and replacement will ensure that at least like-for-like habitat is created in line with the Hanson Restoration Scheme (the Bridge Farm Quarry Site) and for the unnamed lake.

17.320. Screening was undertaken under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ("the Habitats Regulations") in relation to the Cothill Fen SAC and Little Wittenham SAC. The screening concluded that there are no source-receptor pathways by which the Scheme could impact a European Site during the construction or operation of the Scheme. Consequently, there would be no likely significant effects, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.[490] This conclusion was accepted by the LPA, and not disputed by any other party. On the basis of the available evidence, I have no reason to reach a different conclusion.

17.321. Councillor Fielding considers that more mitigation is required to offset the predicted damage to the natural environment. He was particularly concerned about the number of trees to be felled and the consequential loss of habitat for many birds, insects and mammals and the destruction of at least one badger sett.[14.12]

17.322. As explained above, whilst there would be a significant loss of trees due to construction, at year 10 new planting is anticipated to amount to between c.96,000sqm and c.169,000sqm depending on growth rates.[491] This would equate to between 13 and 17%, compared with the existing baseline of 14%. It is therefore likely that there would be a net gain in tree cover.

[489] Professor Wade Technical note paragraph 2.9 (MR Maddox appendix 2.4)

[490] Habitats Regulation Assessment: No Likely Significant Effects Report, October 2022, at para 5.1.1 (CDB.02 Appendix X).

[491] Appendix H Arboricultural Impact Assessment Addendum, April 2023, para. 4.1.5 (CDC.2)

17.323. In terms of hedgerows, the Scheme would result in the loss of 5.67km of hedgerows and the creation of 3.84km of hedgerow. However, the vast majority of the hedgerows to be created would be native species rich with trees of high distinctiveness and moderate condition, such that it would have a greater ecological value than what is lost. This would result in an overall net gain of 40.90% hedgerow units. [492]

17.324. Professor Wade's Technical Note explains that a BNG was produced which concluded that the Scheme would achieve a BNG of at least 10%, in compliance with policy[493]. The LPA's officers accepted this conclusion and no substantive evidence to the contrary was submitted t the Inquiry.

17.325. A BNG Assessment was undertaken in accordance with Biodiversity Metric 3.1, (the guidance at that time). The Metric found that the Scheme would result in an onsite net gain of +146 habitat units (+23.3%), +14 of hedgerow units (+40.9%) (based on the creation of better value habitat rather than an increase in the quantity of hedgerow), and +0.26 river units (+1.26%).

17.326. In order to achieve a 10% net gain in river units, a further 1.78 river units is required. The applicant states that it would not be possible to achieve this on-site and therefore the services of the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment would be employed to deliver 2 river units off-site within Oxfordshire. Taken together, the on-site and off-site river units would exceed 10%, and it is concluded that the Scheme meets the aspiration to achieve at least a BNG of at least 10% for habitat, hedgerow and river units. VWH concur with this view. A revised BNG assessment and updated metric requiring a 10% increase in biodiversity is required by recommended condition 13. [8.35]

17.327. Overall the Scheme would comply with SOLP ENV3 and VWH Policy CP46, as well as paragraph 186 of the NPPF through the delivery of a significant increase in habitat and hedgerow units and a policy compliant increase in river units. These measures would be secured by the recommended conditions.

Flooding

17.328. A Flood Risk Assessment was submitted with the application, which concluded that, with mitigation in place, the Scheme will be at low risk of flooding, will be safe for the lifetime of the development and will not increase flood risk elsewhere, allowing for climate change effects.[494]

[492] See Tables 5, 8, 13 and 15, and section 4 (conclusion) of the revised Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (April 2023) (CDC.2, Appendix I). See also para. 195 of the officer report for the 17-18 July 2023 committee meeting (CDF.1).

[493] Professor Wade's Technical Note dated 30 January 2024 is at Appendix AM2.4 to Mr Maddox's proof. See Section 3 – Biodiversity Enhancement. The latest version of the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (April 2023) is at CDC.2 Appendix I.

[494] ES Vol 3 Appendix 14.1: Flood Risk Assessment (September 2021) (CDA.17.40). See in particular Table 4.8 (p.47), para. 6.1.5, and section 8.

17.329. An area of compensatory flood storage on the northern bank of the River Thames (to the west of the proposed road alignment) is proposed, and the Thames crossing has been designed to account for flood water flows and climate change effects. This would be secured by recommended condition 20. Surface water would be managed through a series of sustainable urban drainage systems made up of swales, filters and drains, and several culverts are also proposed to manage flood waters and flows.

17.330. Neither the EA, nor the LLFA object to the proposal. The LPA concluded that the Scheme was in accordance with development plan and national policy concerning flooding.[495] On the basis of the available evidence I agree that the Scheme would be safe from flooding for the lifetime of the development and would not increase flood risk elsewhere and would comply with paragraph 173 of the NPPF.

Viability of the Scheme

17.331. Funding, deliverability and viability were raised by NPCJC in respect of the called in planning application.

17.332. Mr Ng, on behalf of the NPCJC, suggests that an overall inflation allowance of £62m is required, he also doubted the robustness of OCC's approach to risk. Mr Mann's proof provided for an inflation allowance of £59.3m within his proof of evidence. At the Inquiry he explained that the figures are subject to continuous review, and the most recent review shows a projected reduction of £5.8m to the inflation costs.

17.333. Mr Mann explained that OCC has support from commercial and risk managers from AtkinsRealis in the management of the contingency budgets, which includes risk and optimism bias. Rather than a top down approach to calculating risk, which is more reliable at the earlier stages of a project, OCC is transitioning to a 'bottom up' quantified risk approach, as is appropriate. This is periodically analysed via a quantitative cost risk analysis process to provide a suitable risk budget for the project.

17.334. Mr Harman, on behalf of the NPCJC raised concerns over deliverability and feasibility. He discussed procurement challenges and risks in a generalised way. OCC stated that it is taking all relevant expert advice and is an experienced deliverer of highway projects, such that there is no proper basis to doubt the deliverability of the Scheme within the programme and budget (plus contingency if required). To date, key contracts have been let to Aecom for feasibility and preliminary design, and to Graham Construction Ltd for the delivery of the detailed design of the Culham River Crossing Section and the Clifton Hampden Bypass section. The Scheme is being split into three for the purposes of practical management and delivery of the works: Culham River Crossing, Clifton

[495] Paragraph 229 of the officer report for the 17-18 July 2023 committee meeting (see also paras. 220 – 228) (CDF.1).

Hampden Bypass, and Didcot Science Bridge (which includes the A4130 elements). The procurement strategy for the third element, the Didcot Science Bridge / A1430, has now been agreed and OCC intends to let a detailed design contract, while preparing for the separate procurement of a construction contract.

17.335. Mr Harman suggested that large uncontrolled risks would fall on OCC. Mr Mann explained that OCC generally has control over risk allocation and this is set out in the tender documentation for contractors. Mr Harman's suggestions of unforeseen difficulties due to stakeholder interests such as Network Rail are contrary to evidence which shows that OCC has been engaging in detail with Network Rail, along with other affected statutory undertakers and stakeholders, and is accommodating their requirements through any necessary asset protection agreements.

17.336. Mr Mann has set out the anticipated programme and explained that it has been developed with appropriate expert advice. Homes England have extended the funding availability period to accord with the revised programme resulting from the delay to the determination of the planning application.

17.337. I therefore find no basis to doubt the viability and deliverability of the Scheme.

Loss of Playing Pitch

17.338. Sport England object to the loss of the former playing pitch at the Didcot Power Station because the proposed development would remove the ability for the pitch to be brought back into use, which would be contrary to policy. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Paragraph 103 resists the loss of existing playing fields other than in specific circumstances.

17.339. The pitch has not been used for over 20 years and was used as a private playing field associated with the former Didcot A Power Station site, which ceased use in 2013. In these circumstances I find that the loss of the disused playing field would not materially affect the provision and availability of sports facilities within the VWH. The sports provision that is required within the District is provided for through the VWH LPP1 and VWH LPP2 which are up-to-date. Therefore, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy CF4 of the SOLP and Development Policy 34 of the VWH LPP2.

Benefits of the Scheme **and Consequences of refusing HIF1**

17.340. The delivery of the necessary infrastructure to unlock the high levels of planned housing growth in the Science Vale is clearly the most significant benefit of the HIF1 scheme and is fully consistent with the Government's policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes. The existence of HIF1 underpins the soundness of the allocations, and the

wider spatial strategy. The delivery of HIF1 also supports the plan-led system in accordance with paragraph 15 of the NPPF and public confidence within it. [9.17,9.18, 9.70]

17.341. The large housing allocations at Culham and Berinsfield are expected to make up the bulk of affordable housing delivery once delivery commences. These two sites are expected to deliver 5,200 homes. The existing affordable housing policy requires 40% of these dwellings to be affordable. This would equate to 2,080 affordable homes. This would be a significant benefit towards meeting the existing unmet need for affordable housing and would comply with Policy H9 of the SOLP and accord the policies within the NPPF [9.19]

17.342. In the absence of HIF it is evident that the existing congestion issues would remain, and be exacerbated by the planned growth. There is a possibility that OCC will return to a position of objecting to new traffic-generating development.[496] Such an approach would effectively amount to a moratorium on growth in the Science Vale area - precisely where the SOLP seeks to focus growth.

17.343. It would be possible for both Districts to continue permitting housing growth notwithstanding objections from OCC, if it were judged that the benefits of housing outweighed the conflict with transport policies. Such an approach would be likely to give rise to more dispersed development across rural South Oxfordshire and beyond the Oxfordshire Green Belt, as well as smaller, much less sustainable settlements, relatively distant from all employment and services. [9.67, 15.35]

17.344. SODC does not currently have a 5 year housing land supply. Refusal of the HIF1 Scheme would be likely to give rise to a significant speculative development, focussed on those towns and villages within the relatively unconstrained area between the Green Belt and the Chilterns National Landscape. Such development is inherently less sustainable than delivery of new sustainable settlements in the Science Vale which are well located in terms of jobs and transport. A dispersed pattern of development would result in greater reliance on the private car, together with the associated congestion and emissions. Moreover, as explained by the Oxford Bus Company, a dispersed pattern of development would make it difficult for the bus service to support a reduction in car dependency. [9.68, 15.35]

17.345. Paragraph 85 of the NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. It advises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The Science Vale is an area of economic and innovation growth. It includes the three centres for science and technology at Harwell Campus, CSC, and Milton Park and is home to a significant proportion of the region's scientific

[496] This prevented proposals for even single dwellings in 2018 and 2019 ref, and Steven Sensecall's evidence

research and development, and high technology businesses, as well as the Didcot Growth Accelerator Enterprise Zones. The Local Plans expect it to deliver approximately 20,000 new homes and 20,000 additional jobs by 2031. The HIF1 is essential to the delivery of these jobs and homes.

17.346. UKAEA provided extensive evidence to the Inquiry as to the importance of HIF1 to the development and future Growth of CSC. This position was supported by the former SoS for Energy Security and Net Zero, which underlined the importance of the work at the CSC. In the absence of HIF1 there would be a constraint on the further development of the CSC and it is likely that UKAEA would need to continue to 'trade' floorspace. Therefore, HIF1 is essential to the future economic growth across the Science Vale, including at the three science campuses and is fully consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy.

17.347. HIF1 is also integral to encouraging modal shift within the Science Vale through the provision of a more reliable highway network to support bus services, and the provision of cycling and walking facilities. This approach would accord with the relevant NPPF and development plan policies.

17.348. The Scheme would also deliver benefits in terms of noise reduction and air quality improvements for many residents, including those within the larger settlement of Didcot and the Western Valley dwellings currently under construction. Whilst there would be a number of properties where noise and/or air quality would worsen, a limited number of properties would be impacted and these would generally come within acceptable limits.

17.349. There would be further benefits in respect of the historic bridges where traffic flows would be greatly reduced, thereby reducing potential damage to their physical fabric and facilitating the prioritisation of active travel and/or public transport on these bridges.

17.350. SODC and VWH advise that, although it is at a early stage of preparation, the emerging JLP proposes to continue with the strategy of focussing growth on Didcot and the Science Vale, supported by the delivery of HIF1. If permission is refused, that preferred spatial strategy will not be deliverable and the Districts will have to reconsider the strategy of the emerging JLP. This could delay the production of the JLP. [9.69]

Adequacy of the Environmental Statement

17.351. Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 establishes the minimum information that is necessary for inclusion within the ES, the main application document, in order for it to be considered as such. As outlined above, the LPA made two Regulation 25 requests during the period the application was being considered by the LPA. The applicant

also submitted two ES addendums. The additional information/response to the requests are outlined in Mr Maddox's evidence. [1.8]

17.352. The applicant confirms that the EIA was undertaken in accordance with the 'EIA Regulations and in accordance with the requirements and advice set out in the DMRB. The ES was based on the scope as set out in the Scoping Report, the LPA's Scoping Opinion, as required by the EIA Regulations, and the agreed scope of the Scheme's transport appraisals.

17.353. POETS, NPCJC, East Hendred Parish Council and several interested parties raise concerns about the adequacy of the ES. POETS in particular consider the ES to be fatally flawed, to the extent that Regulation 3 prohibits the granting of planning permission. [1.14]

17.354. The principal objections are that the scope of assessment is inadequate, in respect of geographic areas beyond the Scheme boundary and secondly that there has been a failure to assess reasonable alternatives, particularly non-road alternatives. Mr Tamplin contended the ES also needed to take account of the effects of the use of HIF1. He referred to Holohan in support of this view and states that the ES should have assessed the impacts on Abingdon.[12.3]

17.355. The issues in relation to Abingdon, the Golden Balls roundabout and Nuneham Courtenay are addressed above at paragraphs 17.69-17.82. The focus of the concerns relate to the traffic modelling, and consequential impacts in terms of noise and air quality. In summary, the geographic scope of assessment was defined based on likely significant effects. The areas referred to by objectors were properly considered to be outside those where significant effects were likely. The Scheme will not materially increase traffic flows in Abingdon, or at the Golden Balls roundabout, or to the north at Nuneham Courtenay, or to the west beyond the Milton Interchange.[6.74]

17.356. The air quality and noise assessments used the bespoke methodology for these matters. The study area for air quality focuses on an area 200 metres either side of the road carriageway centrelines of the local air quality affected road network. This defined study area does not include settlements such as Abingdon, Nuneham Courtenay or settlements east of the Golden Balls junction and therefore they were not assessed.

17.357. For noise all links in the traffic model were considered as part of the assessment, initially to identify affected routes. The change to the basic noise level at the A4074 south of Nuneham Courtenay and the A415 east of Abingdon (west of Culham) was negligible, and therefore these links were not assessed further. I see no inconsistency between the ES and the Holohan judgement.

17.358. Turning to the second issue, the regulations require the ES to include:

"a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment"

17.359. Chapter 3 of the ES provides an assessment of alternatives. These are also set out in Mr Wisdom's evidence. A wide range of alternatives were considered, including different transport modes, public transport, active travel and different highways schemes. Overall, 13 different reports were reviewed and summarised in ES Chapter 3: Assessment of Alternatives. Those reports included extensive consideration of options beyond alternative routes, for example public transport-based options, and options based on cycling and pedestrian facilities, notably in the OAR Part 1 (2018), the OAR Part 2 (2019), and the OAR 2021.These are discussed at paragraphs 17.119 -17.138 above. [6.78]

17.360. The LPA found the ES to be adequate and agreed that the ES properly considered reasonable alternatives.[497] I find the ES is legally compliant in scope and content, including in respect of the two issues of alternatives and geographic extent raised by objectors. I find that there is no need to issue a further request under regulation 25 of the EIA Regulations.

Planning Balance

Heritage

17.361. For the reasons I have already given the Scheme would harm the setting of the Scheduled Monument (Settlement North of Thames) Nuneham Courtenay Registered Park and Garden and Conservation Area, Fullamoor Farmhouse listed building and in the short term, the setting of Clifton Hampden Conservation Area and there would be some conflict with SOLP Policies ENV 7,ENV 8, ENV 9 and ENV 10. Whilst this harm would be towards the lower end of the scale, I nonetheless give this harm considerable importance and great weight in the planning balance of this application. These are all designated heritage assets and SOLP Policies ENV 7, ENV 8, ENV 9 and ENV 10 reflect the guidance at NPPF paragraph 208 namely, that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

17.362. The public benefits of the Scheme are considerable. They include facilitating the delivery of housing, including affordable housing, and employment in accordance with the adopted development plans. The Scheme would also help to address existing and future highway congestion, and would encourage modal shift and active travel, which would have consequential benefits for noise and air quality. In addition

[497] Planning and Regulation Committee held on 17th and 18th July 2023

there would be economic benefits in that HIF1 would enable the further development of the science and technology campuses within the Science Vale.

17.363. The considerable and compelling public benefits taken together significantly outweigh the harm to the significance of heritage assets. HIF1 would therefore accord with the Historic Environment Policies of the NPPF.

Overall Planning Balance

17.364. The Scheme would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would result in a loss of openness to the Green Belt. There would also be harm to the Green Belt due to the encroachment of the Scheme on the countryside. The NPPF provides that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. It also states that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

17.365. In addition to the harm by way of inappropriateness, the Scheme would also give rise to the heritage harm identified above, as well as some landscape and visual harm, albeit relatively localised. In terms of noise some properties would experience an increase in noise although it would mostly remain below SOAEL, whilst a significantly greater number would experience a reduction in noise levels.

17.366. Other considerations include the benefits outlined above, particularly the delivery of housing and affordable housing and the risk to future housing and employment delivery should the Scheme not go ahead. In addition, HIF1 forms an integral part of the strategy for the Science Vale to support the planned growth, including at the strategic allocations within the SOLP which were removed from the Green Belt. There would also be benefits to the wider economy provided by the clusters of knowledge and data-driven, and high technology industries within the Science Vale. I find that these other considerations taken together represent very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. [9.45]

17.367. Section 38(6) requires planning decisions to be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate differently. I found above that the Scheme is compliant with national and local planning policy in terms of climate change. I also find that climate change considerations do not indicate that less weight should be afforded to the adopted development plans or that the housing requirements within them should be reduced. [9.71,9.72]

17.368. This application is not the forum to debate whether the future levels of employment and housing growth within the development plans for the area are sustainable, or to re-visit the site allocations within the Local Plans. These matters have been fully assessed through the Local Plan examinations and the plans were found to be sound and are consistent with the NPPF. The LPP1, LPP2 and SOLP set out a clear spatial strategy for Science Vale, identifying, in particular, where homes and jobs are to be provided and make provision for the infrastructure needed to support them. I find that the development plans attract full weight in the planning balance and are not outweighed by climate change considerations. [8.3, 8.4,8.5,8.6,8.7, 9.44,]

17.369. There is some conflict with the development plan policies which provide for the protection of the environment due to some adverse landscape and visual effects, in particular: ENV1 of the SOLP; and CP44 of the VWH LPP1. There is also some minor conflict with SOLP Policies ENV 7,ENV 8, ENV 9 and ENV 10, but as I found above the harm to the designated heritage assets is outweighed by the public benefits of the Scheme.

17.370. I conclude that the development plans expressly support the Scheme and given the relatively limited conflict with the development plans, particularly when seen in the context of the scale of the Scheme as a whole, I find that the Scheme complies with the development plans read a whole.

The Secretary of State's matters

17.371. The Secretary of State particularly wishes to be informed about:

- The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 5);
- The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy as set out in the NPPF (Chapter 6); and
- The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with the development plan for the area.

17.372. The Scheme is consistent in all respects with the Government's policies for delivering a sufficient supply of homes in the NPPF. As the District Councils explained, it is only through the delivery of the Scheme that the necessary planned housing growth can be delivered, and their respective housing land supplies maintained. Therefore the Scheme would significantly boost housing in the Science Vale in accordance with paragraph 60 of the NPPF. It would also facilitate the delivery of a significant quantum of much needed affordable housing. Further, focussing on Culham specifically, the delivery of STRAT9, adjacent to the CSC, with employment and housing co-located, is an exemplar sustainable housing development, in accordance with paragraphs 74 of

the NPPF. I therefore conclude that the Scheme would be entirely consistent with Chapter 5 of the NPPF. [10.34]

17.373. The Scheme is also consistent in all respects with the Government's policies for building a strong and competitive economy. The unlocking of future development at the CSC exemplifies this consistency with the NPPF. The work of the UKAEA at the CSC is an area in which Britain is already a global leader and UKAEA advise that the benefit of its redevelopment, in particular the clustering of its research with others operating in the fusion sector, cannot be realised in another location. I conclude that the Scheme is consistent with Chapter 6 of the NPPF.

17.374. As set out above, I conclude that the Scheme is consistent with the development plan as a whole.

18. Recommendation

18.1. I recommend that the planning permission should be granted subject to the recommended conditions.

Lesley Coffey

PLANNING INSPECTOR

APPENDIX A

APPEARANCES

For the Applicant

Michael Humphries KC

Hugh Flanagan

They Called:

Andrew Blanchard

Alex Maddox

Anna Savage

Aron Wisdom

Bernard Greep

Chris Lansburgh

Claudia Currie

Jane Ash

John Disley

Karl Chan

Suzanne Scott

For Oxfordshire County Council Local Planning Authority

Rachal Wilde

David Periam

For South Oxfordshire District Council

Emma Dring

She called

Emma Baker

Emma Bowerman

For Vale of White Horse District Council

Emmaline Lambert

She called

Emma Baker

Adrian Butler

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority / (UKAEA)

Matthew Henderson of Counsel

He called

Sir Ian Chapman

Tim Foxall

Steve Sensecall

For Neighbourhood Parish Councils Joint Committee, POETS, and East Hendred Parish Council

David Woolley

He called

Roger Williams (POETS)

Richard Tamplin (POETS)

Professor Phil Goodwin (POETS)

Roger Turnbull (East Hendred Parish Council)

Sam Casey Rerhaye (NCPJC)

Alan James (NCPJC)

Dr Angela Jones (NCPJC)

Chris Hancock (NCPJC)

Ng Chien Xen (NCPJC)

Russell Harman (NCPJC)

Interested parties

Councillor Andrew P Jones Didcot Town Council

Councillor Charlie Hicks

Councillor David Pryor

Councillor David Rouane, Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council

Councillor Ian Snowdon, District & County Councillor for Didcot West

Councillor James Barlow Wallingford Ward

Councillor Mark Beddow East Hendred Parish Council

Councillor Nick Fielding, Burcot & Clifton Hampden Parish Council

Councillor Robin Bennett, Berinsfield & Garsington Division

Councillor Sally Povolotsky, County Councillor for Hendreds & Harwell Division

Councillor Simon Peacock Western Valley Parish Council (virtual)

Dr Caroline Baird

Daniel Scharf

Graham Smith

Robin Tucker, Coalition for Health Streets and Active Travel

Jonathon Alcantra Culham Bus Club

Professor Malcolm Airs OBE

Mr Mockler and the trustees of the Milton Manor settled Estate

Peter Kirby

Robin Draper

Ryan Padgett

Sue Scane

APPENDIX B

Documents submitted during the inquiry

I INQ-01	Oxfordshire County Council as Applicant and Acquiring Authority Opening Statement
INQ-02	Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan 2017 - Chapter 9 The Garden Line
INQ-03.1	HIF map with roads and place names
INQ-03.2	Figure 3 - developments map from A Wisdom's Proof
INQ-04	Oxfordshire County Council as Local Planning Authority (LPA) Opening Statement
INQ-05	South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) Opening Statement
INQ-06	Vale of white Horse District Council (VWHDC) Opening Statement
INQ-07	United Kingdom Atomic energy Authority (UKAEA) Opening Statement
INQ-08	R Draper Statement
INQ-09	Dr Caroline Baird Statement
INQ-10	James Barlow Statement
INQ-11	Daniel Scharf September 2023 Statement with February 2024 Update
INQ-12	Sue Scane Statement
INQ-13	Graham Paul Smith Statement
INQ-14	Peter Kirby Statement
INQ-15.1	Transport Assessment UKAEA - November 2021
INQ-15.2	Transport Assessment UKAEA - March 2022
INQ-16	David Pryor Statement
INQ-17	National Planning Policy Framework 2012
INQ-18	Neighbouring Parish Councils – Joint Committee (NPCJC), East Hendred Parish Council (EHPC) and Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably (POETS) Opening Statement
INQ-19	Implementing Decide and Provide TA Requirements
INQ-20	Proposed Questions to OCC Witnesses submitted by Daniel Scharf
INQ-21	Professor Goodwin (POETS) Opening Summary of Evidence
INQ-22	Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel Statement presented by Robin Tucker
INQ-23	Burcot and Clifton Hampden Parish Council Statement presented by Nick Fielding
INQ-24	Cllr Robin Bennett Statement
INQ-25	Cllr Andrew P Jones Statement
INQ-26	Cllr Sally Povolotsky Statement

INQ-27	Culham Bus Club Statement presented by Jonathan Alcantara
INQ-28	Cllr Mark Beddow Statement
INQ-29	Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities Letter to Leaders of the Oxfordshire District Councils dated 5 Dec 2022
INQ-30	Russell Harman Summary of Presentation
INQ-31	Ryan Padgett Statement
INQ-32	Cllr David Rouane, Leader SODC Statement
INQ-33	Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel Statement
INQ-34	Nick Fielding, Burcot & Clifton Hampden Parish Council Statement
INQ-35	Cllr Ian Rouane Leader SODC Statement
INQ-36	Hobbyhorse Lane Appeal Decision Decision December 2023
INQ-37	Understanding the Requirements and Barriers for Modal Shift - WSP Report May 2023
INQ-38	Accompanied Site Visit Itinerary and Route Map (site visit dated 5th & 6th March 2024)
INQ-39	Nuneham Courtenay House, Park and Garden Listing Description 09.03.2024
INQ-40	Nuneham Courtenay Legal Agreement (Redacted) 09.03.2024
INQ-41	Links to Government Statistics on the Decline in Rail & Bus Usage 2018-2022
INQ-42	Further Questions to OCC Witnesses submitted by Daniel Scharf
INQ-43	Notes and slides to accompany Mr Hancock's Evidence
INQ-44	Map with completed and pipeline schemes as per para 3.25 of Mr Wisdom's Evidence
INQ-45	Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee December 2020
INQ-46	Government Response to CCC Progress Report (2023)
INQ-47	Government Response to the Transport Select Committee's Report on the draft revised Networks National Policy Statement March 2024
INQ-48	Local Transport Connectivity Plan Monitoring Report (2022-3)
INQ-49.1	Appleford Sidings Plan GEN_PD-ACM-GEN-DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0107
INQ-49.2	Appleford Sidings Plan GEN_PD-ACM-GEN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-CH-0001
INQ-50	A James HIF1 Landscape Supplementary Proof 21-3-24
INQ-51	Environmental Protection Act 2021
INQ-52	Noise-Policy Statement for England 2010
INQ-53	PPG 2019 Noise - GOV.UK.
INQ-54	Mr Ng Summary Statement
INQ-55	C Landsburgh Technical Note Didcot Garden Road User Update 21.03.24

INQ-56	Truckshift Data 30 Apr-21 to 29 Apr-22 in reference to Dr A M Jones' Evidence
INQ-57	RHA Press Release on HIF1 Relief of A34 Congestion submitted by Dr A Jones
INQ-58	Extract from Axis Transport Statement Oct 23 in reference to Dr A Jones' evidence
INQ-59	Dr A Jones Presentation Notes
INQ-60.1	National Networks National Policy Statement March 2024
INQ-60.2	OCC Note providing relevant updated paragraphs within National Networks Statement
INQ-61	OCC Technical Note in response to Alan James Supplementary Proof (corrected 29.03.24)
INQ-62	Supplementary Statement - Prof Phil Goodwin March 2024
INQ-63	EA response to OCC re. Flood Risk Technical Note (23.11.22)
INQ-64	Public Health England - HIA in Planning Guide (October 2020)
INQ-65	Noise and Vibration - Statement of Qualifications and Experience - Suzanne Scott
INQ-66	Professor Malcolm Airs OBE Statement
INQ-67	Informal Response to Traffic Flow Element of Roger Williams' FOI Request
INQ-68.1	Milton Conservation Area Appraisal
INQ-68.2	Clifton Hampden Conservation Area Map
INQ-68.3	Culham Conservation Area Map
INQ-68.4	Didcot Old Area Conservation Area Map
INQ-68.5	Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area Map
INQ-68.6	Sutton Courtenay Conservation Area Map
INQ-69	STRAT9 Consultation Document referring off-site cycle and pedestrian links
INQ-70	Note on combining noise levels
INQ-71.0	Note on UK PM2.5 Targets
INQ-71.1	Environmental Improvement Plan Extract
INQ-72	POETS/NPCJC/EHPC Closing Statement
INQ-73	VWHDC Closing Statement
INQ-74	UKAEA Closing Statement
INQ-75	SODC Closing Statement
INQ-76	OCC as APP Closing Statement
INQ-77	POETS' Closing Submission in Response to Mr Mann's Note of 26 April 2024

APPENDIX C

Recommended Conditions

1. The development shall commence no later than three years from the date of commencement of development.

   Reason: In accordance with Section 91 to 95 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Other than as may be required by the conditions attached to this planning permission, the development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved documents and drawings, which include:
   • Environmental Statement Addendum (April 2023), Annex 1, Appendix 4.2 Outline Environmental Management Plan
   • Transport Assessment (September 2021)
   • Design and Access Statement (September 2021)
   • Revised Arboricultural Impact Assessment (October 2022)
   • Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan (October 2022)
   • Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (April 2023)
   • Flood Risk Assessment (Environmental Statement Volume III Appendix 14.1: Flood Risk Assessment September 2021)
   • Flood Risk Technical Note (July 2022)
   • Flood Risk Technical Note: Additional Information (December 2022)
   • Environmental Statement, Volume II, Figure 10.1: Noise Location Plan
   • Red Line Boundary - GEN_PD-ACM-HGN-DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZDR-T0040 P02
   • Highway General Arrangement Plans GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0001-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0007-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0008-P05 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0009-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0012-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0013-P05 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0014-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0015-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0016-P05 to GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0018-P05 and GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0019-P04
   • Highway Swept Paths Drawings GEN_PD-ACM-HSPDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0001-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HSPDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0039-P03
   • Highway Visibility Splays Drawings GEN_PD-ACM-HMLDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0001-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-HMLDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZDR-T-0015-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-HMLDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZDR-T-0016-P05 to GEN_PD-ACM-HMLDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZDR-T-0019-P05
   • Swept Path Analysis Sheets 1-7 GEN_PD-ACM-HSP DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0040-P02 to GEN_PD-ACM-HSP DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0046-P02
   • Preliminary Landscape Masterplans GEN_PD-ACM-ELSDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-0001-P06 to GEN_PD-ACM-ELSDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-0008-P06 and GEN_PD-ACM-ELS-

DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-0009-P07 and GEN_PD-ACM-ELSDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-00010-P06 to GEN_PD-ACM-ELSDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-LV-0019-P06
• Lighting General Arrangement Drawings GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-1301-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-1315-P03 and GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-1316-P05 and GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-1317-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HLGDGT_LTG_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-1319-P03
• Drainage General Arrangement Plans Drawings GEN_PD-ACMHDG-DGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0001-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0004-P03 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0005-P04 to GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0006-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0007-P03 to GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0015-P03 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0016-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0017-P03 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0018-P04 and GEN_PD-ACM-HDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0019-P03
• Drainage Catchment Plans Drawings GEN_PD-ACMHDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0020-P03 to GEN_PD-ACMHDGDGT_DRG_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0038-P03 • Proposed Utilities Diversions Drawings GEN_PD-ACMVUTDGT_UTL_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0001-P04 to GEN_PD-ACMVUTDGT_UTL_ZZ_ZZ-DR-T-0019-P04
• River Crossing Bridge Proposed Plan and Elevations Drawings RIV_PD-ACM-SBRSW_STR_ZZ_ZZ DR-T-0002-P03 to RIV_PDACM-SBR-SW_STR_ZZ_ZZ DR-T-0004-P03
• Appleford Sidings Bridge Proposed Plan & Elevations RIV_PDACM-SBR-SW_STR_ZZ_ZZ_DR-T-0001-P03
• Appleford Sidings Road Bridge GA and East Elevation RIV_PD ACM-SBR-DGT_STR_ZZ_ZZ_DR-CB-0040–P02
• Didcot Science Bridge General Arrangement & Elevation DSB_PDACM-SBR-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ DR T 0001-P01
• Preliminary Ecological Mitigation Plans with and without badger mitigation (plans with badger mitigation are confidential) GEN_PDACM-EBD-DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZFG-EG-0034 Sheets 1-4-P01 GEN_PD-ACM-EBD-DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZFG-EG-0037 Sheets 1-4-P01
• Floodplain Compensation Area Sheet 1 of 1 (RIV_PD-ACM-GEN SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-HF-0011)

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out as proposed

3. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The CEMP shall be based on the submitted Outline Environmental Management Plan and shall include the following details as a minimum:
   Details of Construction Activity

• Details of roles and responsibilities of those carrying out the construction, and details of the communication strategy with local residents, landowners, community groups, businesses and others that may be affected during the construction process
• Details of construction phasing
• Details of how complaints can be made and how they will be managed
• Construction working hours and locations over weekdays, weekends and Bank Holidays
• Locations of construction compounds and structures including hoarding, access points, buildings, plant and machinery
• Details of temporary lighting proposals required throughout the construction period with an assessment of the impact of the proposed lighting on residential dwellings and biodiversity
• Details of when and how land required temporarily for construction purposes will re-instated following completion of construction and no later than one year within completion of construction in each part of the development
• Details of how continuous access would be provided to third party land and development where existing access arrangements are affected.

RWE site

The details of construction activity set out above shall include the following matters:
• Details of how unrestricted vehicular and pedestrian access to the former Didcot A power station site and the existing Didcot B power station site shall be maintained on a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week basis throughout the construction period of the development, until the HIF Scheme is practically complete, open to the public and permanent access to RWE site has been connected to the Scheme.
• Details of how protection, any diversion, and any abandonment of utilities for the above sites shall be achieved, in consultation with RWE.
• Details of the sequencing of demolition of RWE's northwest lagoon (located off the roundabout junction of the A4130, Purchas Road and Hawksworth) and construction of the replacement lagoon, so as ensure that demolition of the existing lagoon does not take place until the new lagoon has been constructed and connected to the retained southeast lagoon (also located off the roundabout junction of the A4130, Purchas Road and Hawksworth).
• Sequencing of construction so that severance of the existing RWE gatehouse on Purchas Road does not occur until a new gatehouse (in the location identified in the outline planning permission P22/V2467/O for a replacement gatehouse) is constructed and operational, or a temporary facility has been constructed and is operational which enables the security of the RWE site to be maintained.

Noise, Vibration & Dust

• A Noise and Vibration Management Plan to set out measures to reduce, mitigate and monitor construction noise effects.
• A Dust Management Plan to set out measures to reduce, mitigate and monitor construction dust and air quality effects.

Impact on the River Thames (Part 2 of the development only)

• Details of the timing of proposed construction works over the River Thames.
• Details of the dates and times that the River Thames and Thames Path will be closed or where access will be restricted, including any restriction to the width or navigable height of the River Thames.
• Details of measures to manage and reduce to a minimum the impacts of the River Thames and Thames Path closure on users of the River and Path.
• Details of any barges, floating plant or other vessels to be used during the works adjacent to and across the River Thames.
• Details of when and how consultation and engagement with the Environment Agency Waterways Officers would be carried out through the period of works affecting the River Thames.
• Measures to be employed to and across the River Thames to minimise environmental effects (considering both potential disturbance and pollution).
• Details of measures to ensure any damage or disturbance to the towpath, banks or riverbed for the River Thames will be repaired following the completion of construction.
Biodiversity
• A risk assessment of all construction activities that may be damaging to biodiversity both on and off-site, including details of the timing of works that may harm biodiversity features including badgers, bats, otters, reptiles, and nesting birds.
• Identification of biodiversity protection zones.
• Implementation of protected species licences.
• Details of the measures to be taken to avoid or reduce impacts on species or habitats during the construction process, including species specific method statements for bats, breeding birds, and reptiles.
• Measures to be employed to avoid or reduce impacts on river species and habitats including avoidance of peak fish migration and spawning seasons, and details of fish rescue and relocation as appropriate.
• Details of bio-security measures to prevent the spread of invasive species.
• Details of Ecological Clerk of Works to oversee the construction process.
Landscape and Trees
• Details of measures to protect trees and hedgerows.
• Risk assessment of all activities that may be directly or indirectly damaging to trees both on and offsite.
• Confirmation that no soil storage mounds shall extend into root protection areas of hedges or trees.
• Details of an arboriculture clerk of works to oversee construction. • Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs. *Environmental Management Plans*
• Site Waste Management Plan.
• Soil Management Plan (including Soil Resource Plan and Soil Handling Strategy).
• Materials Management Plan.
• Asbestos Management Plan.

• Water Management Plan.
• Details of measures to mitigate potential extreme weather events during the construction process.

The construction of the development shall thereafter be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not result in harm to the local amenity or environment through noise, dust, traffic, severance or other nuisances during the construction process in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, ENV4, ENV12 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policies 45 and 46 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 and Development Policies 25 and 30 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2.

4. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The CTMP shall include the following details as a minimum:
   • Routeing of HGV construction vehicles to and from the site, including a scheme of construction traffic signage
   • Access arrangements for staff, contractors, deliveries and plant
   • Details of the hours within which delivery vehicles and plant can enter and leave the site
   • Wheel washing facilities and other measures to prevent mud and debris from being carried onto the highway network
   • Details of opportunities taken to enable the movement and delivery of materials via rail and other sustainable means
   • Details of Rights of Way diversions, including management and communication with local communities
   • Measures to avoid and/or reduce and mitigate adverse construction effects on the A34 The construction of the development shall thereafter be carried out in complete accordance with the approved CTMP.

   Reason: To ensure that construction traffic does not have a detrimental impact on the local highway network or local amenity in accordance with Development Policy 23 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2, and policies DES6 and ENV12 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

5. Prior to the commencement in each part of the development, a topographical contour plan or plans to show the existing and final proposed levels of the development in that part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be delivered in complete accordance with the approved drawings.

   Reason: To ensure the development does not cause unacceptable levels of harm to the local area through incongruent landforms and associated effects on visual amenity and drainage in accordance with policies ENV1

and DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Core Policy 44 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

6. Prior to the erection of any lighting on each part of the development and notwithstanding the details submitted with the application, details of proposed lighting in that part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, taking account of areas to remain unlit, including:
   - The viaduct and bridge sections of the bridge across the River Thames; and
   - The Scheme between Hartwright House and the River Thames bridge, except for where safety standards require lighting at proposed junctions. The submitted details shall include the location, height, type and direction of all light sources, including intensity of illumination, shields, sensors and timing of lighting use. The lighting scheme shall be designed to avoid disturbance of light sensitive wildlife and shall be in accordance with and shall be in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/18 'Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK'. Any lighting shall thereafter not be installed in other than in accordance with the approved lighting details.

   Reason: In the interests of visual amenity, to avoid harm to dark night skies, and to ensure no protected or notable species of conservation concern are disturbed in accordance with South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policies DES6, ENV1 and ENV12, and Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2 Development Policies 21 and 23.

7. Subject to the consideration of any details submitted pursuant to moving the proposed noise barrier near Appleford adjacent to the highway (which should cover feasibility and change in noise level at nearby receptors) and prior to the first operational use of each part of the development, noise barriers and any other noise mitigation measures including low noise surfacing shall be installed in accordance with:
   - The location of noise barriers and low noise surfacing shown in Environmental Statement, Figure 10.1[CD A.16]; and
   - The heights stated in Outline Environmental Management (April 2023) [CD C.1], Table 3.3: Scheme design (D) REAC, Reference DN-2 and DN-3
   This detail should be approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include elevational drawings of the barrier(s) and details of the materials, appearance, planting, specification and acoustic performance of the barrier(s).

   Once erected, the noise barriers shall be retained and maintained in full working order for so long as the development is in use by motorised vehicles.

   Reason: To reduce adverse noise effects and to protect the local landscape character and visual amenity in accordance with Policies ENV1, ENV12, DES2 and DES6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Development Policies 37 and 44 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan

2031 Part 1 and Policies 23, 24, and 25 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2.

8. Prior to the commencement of construction of each of the structures listed below, details of the external appearance of the structure including, but not limited to, the colour and decorative treatment of parapets, illumination (not street lighting) finishing treatments, such as textures, to abutments, piers, wing walls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.
   (i) The Didcot Science Bridge structure (taking into account the constraints of the Network Rail design requirements, and including enhancements to the design);
   (ii) The Appleford Sidings Bridge structure; and
   (iii) The River Thames Crossing structure (viaduct and bridge).
   Each structure shall thereafter be constructed in complete accordance with the approved details prior to the development being opened to motorised vehicles and maintained thereafter.

   Reason: In the interest of the visual amenity of the area and to ensure the creation of a high quality environment in accordance with policies ENV1 and DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Core Policies 37 and 44 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 and development policy 20 of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

9. Opportunities should be sought to open footways, footpaths and cycleways shown on the approved drawings, prior to first use of the Scheme by vehicles, where this does not create safety hazards to active travel users or impose unnecessarily adverse constraints on construction sequencing.

   Reason: To encourage a shift to sustainable and active travel modes in accordance with policies TRANS2 and TRANS5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policies 33 and 35 of the Vale of White Horse Local Part 1, and CUL8 of the Culham Neighbourhood Plan.

10. Visibility splays shall be provided in accordance Highway Visibility Splays Drawings Sheets 1 – 19. The visibility splays shall be maintained unobstructed as approved for so long as the development is in use by motorised vehicles.

    Reason: To ensure the safe and efficient operation of the local highway network in accordance with Development Policy 16 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2 and Policy TRANS5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

11. Prior to the commencement of construction in each part of the development, a Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan (LBMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The LBMP shall be based on the provisions set out in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity

Management Plan (OLBMP) submitted with the planning application documents and shall include the following as a minimum:

- A description and evaluation of the landscape and ecological features to be managed within the site
- Ecological trends and constraints that may influence management • The aims and objectives of the management plan and appropriate management options for achieving the aims and objectives
- Prescriptions for management actions
- Preparation of a work schedule
- Details of ecological enhancements, specifications and locations to include artificial roost features for bats and birds, hedgehog domes, invertebrate houses and other features of benefit to wildlife
- Details of the individual, body or organisation responsible for the implementation of the plan; and
- Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures to ensure the development delivers the objectives set out in the plan.

The LBMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured and details of a 30-year habitat management programme. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved LEMP shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development results in landscape and biodiversity enhancement in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV3 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Core Policies 44, 45 and 46 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

12. Prior to the commencement of construction in each part of the development, updated protected species surveys shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for any survey submitted with the planning application that is over two years old or in the case of a badger survey when it is over six months old. The conclusions of these updated survey(s) should be included within a detailed biodiversity mitigation and enhancement strategy, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development or any required earth moving or vegetation clearance. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved updated surveys and any revised mitigation and enhancement measures contained therein.

Reason: To ensure the protection of notable and protected species and habitats in accordance with The Conservation of Species & Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended), Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, and in accordance with

policy ENV2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Core Policy 46 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

13. Prior to the commencement of any part of the development hereby permitted, a final Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNG Assessment) and updated metric shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The BNG Assessment shall take into account the detailed landscaping scheme approved pursuant to condition 21 and the topographical tree survey approved pursuant to condition 22 as well as any other relevant factors arising since the grant of planning permission. The assessment shall demonstrate that the development will achieve no less than a 10% increase in biodiversity units above the baseline when trading rule requirements have been met. The Assessment shall also include the following:
    i. A detailed management and monitoring plan covering a minimum of 30 years for the delivery of the on-site biodiversity units identified in the BNG Assessment; and
    ii. A certificate confirming the agreement of an Offsetting Provider approved by the County Planning Authority to deliver a Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme for the provision of riparian habitat that cannot be delivered on site. The written approval of the County Planning Authority will not be issued unless and until the certificate has been issued by the Offsetting Provider. The details of the biodiversity enhancements shall meet the trading rule requirements as set out in the approved BNG Assessment and shall be documented by the Offsetting Provider and issued to the County Planning Authority for their records.

    The approved BNG Assessment shall thereafter be delivered in complete accordance with the approved details.

    Reason: To compensate for the net loss of biodiversity resulting from the development by providing biodiversity enhancements in accordance with South Oxfordshire Local Plan policy ENV3 and Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 Core Policies 45 and 46.

14. Prior to commencement of development in each part of the development, a phased risk assessment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The assessment shall be carried out by a competent person and in accordance with current government and Environment Agency Guidance and Approved Codes of Practice such as Land Contamination: Risk Management 2020 and BS10175:2011 +A2:2017 'Investigation of Potentially Contaminated Sites'. The risk assessment shall include the following:
    • Phase 1 shall incorporate a desk study and site walkover to identify all potential contaminative uses on site to inform the conceptual site model. If potential contamination is identified in Phase 1 than a Phase 2 investigation shall be undertaken.

• Phase 2 shall include a comprehensive intrusive investigation in order to characterise the type, nature and extent of contamination present, the risks to receptors and, if significant contamination is identified to inform the remediation strategy.
• Phase 3 shall include a remediation strategy to ensure the site will be rendered suitable for its proposed use. The construction of the development shall thereafter be undertaken in complete accordance with the approved phased risk assessment and remediation strategy.

Reason: To ensure that any ground, water and associated gas contamination is identified and adequately addressed to ensure the safety of the development, the environment and to ensure the site is suitable for the proposed use in accordance with Policies ENV11, ENV12 and DES6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policy 43 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1, and Development Policies 23, 24 and 27 of the Vale of White Horse

15. If, during the construction of any part of development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development in that part of the development shall be carried out unless and until a remediation strategy detailing how the contamination will be dealt with has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall thereafter be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site in accordance with Policies ENV11, ENV12 and DES6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policy 43 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and Development Policies 23, 24 and 27 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2.

16. No drainage systems for infiltration of surface water to the ground shall be installed unless and until details have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include an assessment of risks of the infiltration to controlled waters. Where such details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, they shall thereafter only be installed in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site in accordance with Policies ENV12 and EP4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policy 42 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and Development Policies 23, 24 and 27 of the Vale of White Horse.

17. Prior to the commencement of development in each part of the development, a detailed sustainable surface water drainage System (SuDS) for that part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall include:
• A compliance report to demonstrate how the scheme complies with the "Local Standards and Guidance for Surface Water Drainage on Major Development in Oxfordshire"
• Full drainage calculations for all events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change
• A Flood Exceedance Conveyance Plan
• Comprehensive infiltration testing across the site to BRE DG 365
• Details design drainage layout drawings of the SuDS proposals including cross-section details
• Detailed maintenance and management plan in accordance with Section 32 of CIRCA C753 including maintenance scheduled of each drainage element
• Details of how water quality will be managed during construction and post development in perpetuity
• Consent for any connections into third party drainage systems
• Details of upstream silt mitigation prior to connection to watercourses.

Reasons: To ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site in accordance with Policies ENV12 and EP4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Policy 42 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1, and Development Policies 23, 24 and 27 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2.

18. Prior to first operational use of each part of the development, a SuDS Compliance Report for that part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The Report shall be prepared by an appropriately qualified engineer and shall demonstrate that the sustainable surface water drainage system has been installed in accordance with the details approved pursuant to condition 17). The report shall include:
• As-built drawings in dwg and pdf format
• Inspection details of key SuDS features such as flow controls, storage features and volumes, critical linking features or pipework with photographs and evidence of inspections
• Details of any remediation works required following initial inspections and evidence that such remedial works have been completed
• Details of management arrangements to maintain the system in the longer term. The surface water drainage system shall be maintained thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure that the principles of sustainable drainage are incorporated into this proposal and to ensure the management of surface

water in accordance with Core Policy 42 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 and policy EP4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

19. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the mitigation measures set out within the following documents and these measures should retained and maintained throughout the lifetime of the development: - the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (Didcot Garden Town HIF 1 Scheme Environmental Statement Volume III Appendix 14.1: Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) September 2021; - Flood Risk Technical Note dated 20 July 2022; and- Flood Risk Technical Note: Additional Information, 8th December 2022.

    Reason: To ensure the development remains safe and to prevent flooding elsewhere by ensuring that compensatory storage of flood water and flood mitigation is provided in accordance with Core Policy 42 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1, policy EP4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and paragraph 167 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

20. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for level compensatory flood storage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall include measures to identify how the compensatory flood storage and any altered or proposed culverts will be inspected and maintained throughout the lifetime of the development.

    Reason: To ensure that there are no detrimental impacts to flood storage or flood flow routes in accordance with Core Policy 42 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1, policy EP4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and paragraph 167 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

21. Prior to the commencement of construction in each part of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The details shall be based on the approved Landscape General Arrangement Drawings, and shall include the following as a minimum:
    • A detailed landscape masterplan showing existing, retained and proposed vegetation. The hedgerow and trees to the B4016 tie in with the Clifton Hampden Bypass shall either be retained or replaced where possible. Consideration should also be given to planting hedges and trees to the edges of swales, low growing grass to central reserves and the translocation of beech hedge at the Culham Science Centre entrance.
    • Hard surfacing materials.
    • Minor artefacts (such as furniture, refuse or other storage units, signage).
    • Drainage features, including SuDS.
    • Details of proposed landscaping features such as climbing walls and sedum blanket.

• Plant specifications noting species, plant sizes, numbers and densities as well as seed mix and their provenance; ground preparation and ongoing maintenance.

The hard and soft landscaping works shall thereafter be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details and all planting and seeding shall be carried out in the first available planting season following the completion of each part of the development.

Reason: In the interest of the visual amenity of the area and to ensure the creation of a high quality environment in accordance with policies ENV1, and DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

22. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development, an updated tree survey shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The tree survey shall show the precise topographic location of all trees, capturing those not previously recorded via topographical survey, within or on the edge of the site including those where the approved Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Addendum show the locations as approximate. The survey shall ensure the important trees including Veteran Tree 424; trees T14, T102, G255, G308, T311, T498, T533, T534, T695 and T699; and trees within G1, G2 & G3 of TPO137/2009 and the Clifton Hampden Conservation Area are correctly plotted and that impacts to them are limited and quantified accurately.

Reason: To ensure the protection of trees in accordance with Policies ENV1 and ENV8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Core Polices 44 and 46 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

23. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development, a detailed Arboriculture Method Statement (AMS) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The AMS shall set out the detailed tree protection measures that will used during the construction process and shall include cross-sections with construction depths and materials. Details of mitigation measures to offset the impacts of the installation of utilities within root protection areas shall also be included. For the avoidance of doubt no Veteran Trees or trees that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order shall be removed from the site and protection measures for Trees T424, G454 and trees subject to TPO 137/2009 shall be specifically referenced to ensure their protection during construction.

Thereafter, trees shall be protected in complete accordance with the approved details for the duration of the construction period.

Reason: To ensure the protection of trees in accordance with Policies ENV1 and ENV8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Core Polices 44 and 46 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

24. Prior to the commencement of each part of the development shown on drawing GEN_PD-ACM-GENDGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ_DR-CH-0005 Rev P02, a Carbon Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The plan shall be in accordance with PAS 2080 and shall identify opportunities to be taken to support carbon reductions and carbon emissions through the lifecycle of the development. The plan shall include a quantification of carbon emissions, target setting, baseline setting and monitoring, reporting and proposals for continual improvement. The Carbon Management Plan shall thereafter be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details and reviewed and updated every six months during the construction period.

    Reason: To minimise the carbon impacts of the development and to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in accordance with policies DES7 and DES8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Core Policies 37, 40 and 43 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

25. Prior to the first operational use of each part of the development, an updated Climate Vulnerability Risk Assessment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The assessment shall be LA 114 Climate (June 2021) compliant and shall include details of the embedded and additional mitigation proposed for each of the climate vulnerability impacts identified within Chapter 15 (Climate) of the submitted Environmental Statement. For the avoidance of doubt, it shall also consider the effects of pot hole formation, heavy rain and wetter winters, soil stability, and drier summers. The mitigation measures identified within the assessment shall thereafter be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details.

    Reason: To ensure the development is resilient to climate effects in accordance with policy DES8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policies 37 and 40 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1, and paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

26. No development shall take place within the Didcot to Culham River Crossing section of the development until revised restoration and aftercare schemes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for the Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site.

    Reason: To ensure the high quality and timely restoration of Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site in accordance with policies W6 and M10 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy.

27. No development shall take place within the Didcot to Culham River Crossing section of the development until revised restoration and aftercare schemes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority for Bridge Farm Quarry.

Reason:In order to ensure that the Scheme does not prejudice the restoration of the Bridge Farm Quarry site.

28. Prior to the commencement of development in each part of the development, a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation, prepared by a professional archaeological organisation acceptable to the County Planning Authority, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall provide details of the professional archaeological organisation that will carry out the investigation. The approved scheme shall thereafter be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details.

    Reason: To safeguard the recording of archaeological matters within the site in accordance with policies ENV6 and ENV9 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policy 39 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 and Development Policies 36 and 39 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2.

29. Prior to the commencement of development in each part of the development and following the approval of the Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation pursuant to condition 29), a programme of archaeological investigation shall be undertaken by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation. The programme of work shall include all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable archive and a full report for publication shall thereafter be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority within two years of the completion of the archaeological fieldwork.

    Reason: To safeguard the identification, recording, analysis and archiving of heritage assets before they are lost and to advance understanding of the heritage assets in their wider context through publication and dissemination of the evidence in accordance with policies ENV6 and ENV9 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policy 39 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan, and Development policies 36 and 39 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

30. Details of the design and appearance of the downgraded section of the A415 including details of materials and structures including lighting and signage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented no later than three months from the date of the downgraded section of the A415 being closed to motorised vehicle through traffic.

    Reason: In the interest of the visual amenity of the area and to ensure the creation of a high quality environment in accordance with policies ENV1 and DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

31. A compensatory tree planting scheme on land controlled by the applicant should be investigated with Oxfordshire County Council's Arboricultural officers, and if deemed appropriate of the compensatory tree planting scheme should be provided, including measures to be taken to protect and maintain the planted trees and replacement planting for any that die in the first 30 years following the first opening of each part of the proposed development. The approved scheme shall be implemented thereafter.

    Reason: To ensure the protection and replacement planting of trees in accordance with Policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Polices 44 and 46 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 and the Tree Policy for Oxfordshire April 2022.

32. Details of the replacement 'RWE' lagoon (as shown on approved drawing Didcot Science Bridge General Arrangement Sheet 6 of 19 (GEN_PD ACM GEN DGT_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ DR T 0006 Rev P04)) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The replacement lagoon shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.

    Reason: In the interest of the visual amenity of the area and to ensure the creation of a high quality environment in accordance with policies ENV1 and DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

33. Prior to the commencement of the Didcot to Culham river crossing section of development, the applicant shall submit details to the County Planning Authority of how it has explored the possibility of relocating the proposed noise barrier closer to the proposed carriageway open to motorised users adjacent to Appleford Village, by relocating it between the carriageway open to motorised users and the non-motorised users provision. If the submission concludes that this is not possible, or not of substantial benefit in terms of noise reduction, it shall set out the reasons why it is not feasible and desirable to move the barrier. If the submission concludes that this is possible and of benefit, then details of any proposed change to the noise barrier adjacent to Appleford Village shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any construction works as part of the submission required to be made pursuant to condition 7).

    Reason: To reduce adverse noise effects and to protect the local landscape character and visual amenity in accordance with Policies ENV1, ENV12, DES2 and DES6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policies 37 and 44 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part and Development Policies 23, 24 and 25 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2.

34. Prior to the commencement of the Didcot to Culham river crossing section of development, details of the noise monitoring equipment to be installed at a location in Appleford Village for the duration of the

construction works of the Didcot to Culham River Crossing part of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented thereafter.

Reason: To monitor noise levels generated by the construction works to ensure that the development is in compliance with the CEMP approved pursuant to condition 3 so as to not result in harm to the local amenity or environment through noise during the construction process in accordance Development Policies 25 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2.

35. The carbon management plan approved and updated pursuant to the requirements of condition 24) shall be further updated once the development is open to motorised vehicles to set out the measures which have been carried out to promote and facilitate a reduction in carbon emissions from the operational use of the development. This shall be submitted to the County Planning Authority no later than the first anniversary of the date of first opening to motorised vehicles and for nine subsequent years after that.

    Reason: To minimise the carbon impacts of the development and to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in accordance with policies DES7 and DES8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Core Policies 37, 40 and 43 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

36. Prior to the commencement of the development, details of the delivery of a bus priority scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented from the date of first opening of the development to motorised vehicles. Any changes to the proposed details thereafter shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority prior to their implementation.

    Reason: To encourage a shift to sustainable and active travel modes in accordance with policies TRANS2 and TRANS5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Core Policies 33 and 35 of the Vale of White Horse Local Part 1, and CUL8 of the Culham Neighbourhood Plan.

APPENDIX D

Additional condition suggested by POETS

Within two weeks of the first implementation of this permission, the Applicant shall establish a Joint Liaison Committee to monitor the implementation and initial operation for a duration agreed by the Committee, of the approved development. The Committee shall comprise one representative of all the Parish Councils listed below, two representatives of the Applicant Authority and one representative of each of the Vale of White Horse District Council and the South Oxfordshire District Council. It shall, at its first meeting, appoint one of its members to act as Chair and another member to act as Secretary. The scope and remit of the Committee and all decisions shall be agreed by majority vote between all representatives at the first meeting.

The Committee shall meet, in the first instance, no later than six weeks after commencement of the development, and thereafter monthly, and shall receive written reports from the Applicant arising from implementation and/or operation of the development in response to concerns submitted by any member of the Committee. Any such report shall be discussed by the Committee and the appointed Secretary shall take Minutes of every meeting.

Those Minutes shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for information and shall be available for inspection by any member of the public at any reasonable time at a specified location agreed by the Committee.

Invited Participant Parish Councils

Milton Parish Council

Sutton Courtenay Parish Council

Appleford Parish Council

Didcot Town Council

Culham Parish Council

Burcot & Clifton Hampden Parish Council

Nuneham Courtenay Parish Council

Reasons for the Condition

In order the protect the amenity of residents of the participating Parishes in terms of compliance with any other condition attached to the permission, in respect of noise, vibration, air pollution, air quality, human health, and to ensure the safeguarding of the landscape, of biodiversity and of heritage assets.

[VoWH Local Plan 2031: Policies DP21 (External Lighting), DP23 (Impact of Development on Amenity), DP25 (Noise Pollution), DP26 (Air Quality), DP30 (Watercourses), DP31 (Protection of Rights of Way etc), DP36 (Heritage Assets), DP37 (Conservation Areas), DP38 (Listed Buildings), DP39 (Archaeology and Ancient Monuments)]

[South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035: Policies ENV1 (Landscape and Countryside), ENV2 & ENV3 (Biodiversity), ENV4 (Watercourses), ENV5 (Green Infrastructure in New developments), ENV6 (Historic Environment), ENV7 (Listed Buildings), ENV8 (Conservation Areas), ENV9 (Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments), ENV10 (Historic Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens and Historic Landscapes), ENV11 & ENV12 (Pollution, etc), EP1 (Air Quality), EP4 (Flood Risk)]

APPENDIX E

Core Documents

A - Planning Application Documents

*** Please note items marked .zip will download a folder of documents**

- A.01 Application Covering Letter (AECOM) Version 2
- A.02 Application Forms and Certificates
- A.03 Submitted Schedule of Land Owners
- A.04 Planning Statement (AECOM)
- A.05 Statement of Community Involvement
- A.06 Preliminary Lighting and Electrical Design Report Part 1
- A.06 Preliminary Lighting and Electrical Design Report Part 2
- A.07 Transport Assessment (AECOM)
- A.08 Foul Water and Utilities Assessment
- A.09 Minerals and Waste Assessment
- A.10 Arboriculture Impact Assessment Report (AECOM)
- A.11 Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan (AECOM)
- A.12 Drainage Strategy Report.zip
- A.13 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment.zip
- A.14 Ground Investigations Report.zip
- A.15 ES Volume 1.zip
- A.16 ES Volume 2.zip
- A.17 ES Volume 3.zip
- A.18 Didcot HIF1 ES Non Technical Summary
- A.19 Design & Access Statement.zip
- A.20 Didcot Science Bridge General Arrangement & Elevation
- A.21 Call-in decision letter from Planning Casework Unit to Jonathan Hill of AECOM (agent for the planning application) 25th July 2023
- A.22 Typical Cross Sections.zip

B - Revised Submission: Reg 25 (November 2022)

- B.01 Environmental Statement Addendum (including Appendices).zip
- B.02 Appendix A Regulation 25 Request
- B.02 Appendix B Extended Cross Section Sheets.zip
- B.02 Appendix C Long Sections Sheets.zip
- B.02 Appendix D General Arrangement Sheets.zip
- B.02 Appendix E Arrangement and Utilities Drawings - Part 1.zip
- B.02 Appendix E Arrangement and Utilities Drawings - Part 2.zip
- B.02 Appendix E Arrangement and Utilities Drawings - Part 3.zip
- B.02 Appendix F FCC Lagoon drawings.zip
- B.02 Appendix G Oversized Bridge Examples

- B.02 Appendix H Swept Path Analysis Sheet.zip
- B.02 Appendix I Impact Upon Abingdon Technical Note
- B.02 Appendix J RWE Transport Assessment response
- B.02 Appendix K Climate Change Position Statement
- B.02 Appendix L OCC Climate Impact Assessment
- B.02 Appendix M Flood Risk Technical Note
- B.02 Appendix N: Floodplain Compensation Area Sheet
- B.02 Appendix O OCC Flows and Volumes Pro-Formas.zip
- B.02 Appendix P Response to LLFA and District Council Comments
- B.02 Appendix Q Acoustic barrier information
- B.02 Appendix R Revised Biodiversity Net Gain assessment
- B.02 Appendix S Air Quality Technical Notes March and October 2022
- B.02 Appendix T Playing field response
- B.02 Appendix U PRoW Amendments Sheets
- B.02 Appendix V Revised Landscape Masterplans.zip
- B.02 Appendix W Didcot HIF1 Revised Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- B.02 Appendix X Habitats Regulation Assessment
- B.02 Appendix Y Appleford Sidings Road Bridge General Arrangement and East Elevation (RIV_PD ACM SBR-DGT_STR_ZZ_ZZ DR CB 0040
- B.03 Revised Outline Landscape & Biodiversity Management Plan
- B.04 HIF_1_Ref25 Letter (AECOM)
- B.05 Harwell Campus Bicycle Group Response
- B.06 Ladygrove / Sires Hill junction (OFF13) Capacity Assessment Update
- B.07 Didcot Garden Town HIF1 Overall Scheme Archaeological Evaluation
- B.08 Didcot Town Council Response
- B.09 Joint Parish Council Response
- B.10 Network Rail Response

C - Revised Submission: Reg 25 (April 2023)

- C.1 Environmental Statement Addendum (April 2023)
- C.1 Environmental Statement Addendum Folder of Appendices.zip
- C.2 EIA Regulation 25 Response (April 2023)
- C.2 EIA Regulation 25 Response Folder of Appendices.zip
- C.4 Environment Agency Response

D - Revised Submission: June 2023

- D.001 - D.019 Highway General Arrangement Plans Drawings.zip
- D.020 - D.058 Swept Path Analysis Sheet 1 - 39.zip

- D.059 - D.077 Highway Visibility Splays Drawings Sheets 1 - 19.zip
- D.078 - D.114 Cross Sections Sheets 1 - 37.zip
- D.115 - D.133 Construction Phasing Plans Sheets 1 - 19.zip
- D.134 - D.152 Revised Landscape Masterplans Sheets 1 - 19.zip
- D.153 - 171 Revised Lighting design Sheets 1 - 19.zip
- D.172 - D.190 Revised Drainage Design Sheets 1 - 19.zip
- D.191 - D.209 Drainage Catchment Plan Sheets 1 - 19.zip
- D.210 - D.214 Drainage Typical Details Drawing 1 - 5.zip
- D.215 - D.233 Proposed Utilities Diversions Drawings 1 - 19.zip
- D.234 - 236 River Crossing Structures GA & Elevations sheets 1 - 3.zip
- D.237 - D.238 Appleford Sidings Bridge Road Drawings 1 - 2.zip
- D.239 - D.240 Light Contour Sheets 1- 2.zip
- D.241 - D.242 Light Preliminary Counters Sheets.zip
- D.243 - D.249 Swept Path Analysis Sheets 1 - 7.zip

E - Consultee Comments

- E.01 Appleford Parish Council_ Air Quality Consultation Response 07 02 2022.pdf
- E.02 Appleford Parish Council_Statement of Objection on Air Quality and Health.pdf
- E.03 Didcot Town Council Consultation Response 10 12 2021.pdf
- E.04 Neighbouring Parish Council Joint Committee Holding Objection18 02 2022.pdf
- E.05 Network Rail Consultation Response 06 01 2022.pdf
- E.06 Scottish and Southern Electricity Consultation Response 26112021.pdf
- E.07 Vale of White Horse District Council Environmental Protection Response 18 11 2021.pdf
- E.08 RSPB Consultation Response 17112021.pdf
- E.09 The Gardens Trust Consultation Response 28 11 2021.pdf
- E.10 Long Wittenham Parish Council Consultation Response 06 12 2021.pdf
- E.11 Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service Consultation Response 03 12 2021.pdf
- E.12 Sport England Consultation Response 30 11 2021.pdf
- E.13 National Highways Consultation Response 06 12 2021.pdf
- E.14 Office of Nuclear Regulation Consultation Response 03 12 2021.pdf
- E.15 Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology Consultation Response 06 12 2021.pdf
- E.16 Berinsfield Parish Council Comments 08 12 2021.pdf
- E.17 National Grid Electricity Consultation Response 26 11 2021.pdf
- E.18 National Grid Gas Consultation Response 08 12 2021.pdf

- E.19 Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention and Design Consultation Response 10 12 2021.pdf
- E.20 Sutton Courtenay Parish Council Consultaiton Response 10 12 2021.pdf
- E.21 SGN Consultation Response 10 12 2021.pdf
- E.22 Historic England Consultation Response 09 12 2021.pdf
- E.23 CPRE Vale of White Horse Consultation Response 13 12 2021.pdf
- E.24 Oxfordshire County Council Public Health Consultation Response 13 12 2021.pdf
- E.25 MoD Safeguarding Consultation Response 14 12 2021.pdf
- E.26 Harwell Parish Council Consultation Response 16 12 2021.pdf
- E.27 National Grid Electricity Consultation Response 16 12 2021.pdf
- E.28 Natural England Consultation Response 21 01 2022.pdf
- E.29 Oxfordshire County Council Highway Authority Consultation Response 27 01 2022.pdf
- E.30 Oxfordshire County Council Environment Advisor Consultation Response 27 01 2022.pdf
- E.31 Oxfordshire County Council Landscape Advisor Consultation Response 27 01 2022.pdf
- E.32 BBOWT Consultation Response 27 01 2022.pdf
- E.33 Vale of White Horse District Council Consltation Response 04 02 2022.pdf
- E.34 South Oxfordshire District Council Consultation Response 04 02 2022.pdf
- E.35 CPRE Vale of White Horse Consultation Response 07 03 2022.pdf
- E.36 Oxfordshire County Council Highway Authority Consultation Response 08 03 2022.pdf
- E.37 Oxfordshire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority Response 16 03 2022.pdf
- E.38 Oxfordshire County Council Rights of Way Consultation Response 05 04 2022.pdf
- E.39 Nuneham Courtenay Parish Council Consultation Response 15 05 2022.pdf
- E.40 Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Committee Noise objection 23 05 2022.pdf
- E.41 Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Ccommittee Interim objection 13 06 2022.pdf
- E.42 Oxfordshire County Council Highway Authority Consultation Response 01 08 2022.pdf
- E.43 National Grid Gas Consultation Response 25 10 2022.pdf
- E.44 Ramblers Association Consultation Response 16 11 2022.pdf
- E.45 South Oxfordshire District Council Environmental Protection Response 17 11 2022.pdf

- E.46 Garden History Society Consultation Response 22 11 2022.pdf
- E.47 National Grid Gas Consultation Response 17 11 2022.pdf
- E.48 Ramblers Association Consultation Response 21 11 2022.pdf
- E.49 Sport England Consultation Response 24 11 2022.pdf
- E.50 National Grid Electricity Consultation Response 30 11 2022.pdf
- E.51 Natural England Consultation Response 30 11 2022.pdf
- E.52 Didcot Town Council Consultation Response 09 12 2022.pdf
- E.53 Historic England Consultation Response 10 12 2022.pdf
- E.54 National Highways Consultation Response 19 12 2022.pdf
- E.55 BBOWT Consultation Response 21 12 2022.pdf
- E.56 Vale of White Horse District Council Consultation Response 22 12 2022.pdf
- E.57 South Oxfordshire District Council Consultation Response 23 12 2022.pdf
- E.58 East Hendred Parish Council Consultation Response 09 01 2023.pdf
- E.59 Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology Consultation Response 12 01 2023.pdf
- E.60 Garsington Parish Council Consultation Response 20 01 2023.pdf
- E.61 Sutton Courtenay Parish Council Consultation Response, 21 01 2023
- E.62 Nuneham Courtney Parish Council Consultation Response 21 01 2023.pdf
- E.63 Environment Agency Consultation Response 14 04 2022.pdf
- E.64 Environment Agency Consultation Response 13 03 2023.pdf
- E.65 Environment Agency Consultation Response 02 06 2023.pdf
- E.66 CPRE Oxfordshire Consultation Response 20 01 2023.pdf
- E.67 Friends of the Earth Oxford Comments 23 01 2023.pdf
- E.68 Oxfordshire County Council Public Health Consultation Response 20 01 2023.pdf
- E.69 Neighbouring Parish Councils Joint Committee Comments 20 01 2023.pdf
- E.70 MoD Safeguarding Consultation Response 31 01 2023.pdf
- E.71 Oxfordshire County Council Highway Authority Consultation Response 01 02 2023.pdf
- E.72 Didcot Town Council Consultation Response 16 02 2023.pdf
- E.73 Oxfordshire County Council Enviironment Advisor Consultation Response 27 02 2023.pdf
- E.74 Oxford Preservation Trust comments 19 01 2022.pdf
- E.75 South Oxfordshire District Council Consultation Response 20 06 2023.pdf
- E.76 Vale of White Horse District Council Consultation Response 16 06 2023.pdf

- E.77 Neighbouring Parisch Councils Joint Committee Comments 12 06 2023.pdf
- E.78 Friends of the Earth Oxford Comments 14 06 2023.pdf
- E.79 Oxfordshire County Council Environment Advisor Consultation Response 13 06 2023.pdf
- E.80 East Hendred Parish Council Comments 15 03 2023.pdf
- E.81 National Highways Consultation Response 07 06 2023.pdf
- E.82 East Hendred Parish Council Consultation Response 06 06 2023.pdf
- E.83 Sport England Consultation Response 03 05 2023.pdf
- E.84 South Oxfordshire District Council Environmental Protection Response 12 05 2023.pdf
- E.85 The Gardens Trust Consultation Response 15 05 2023.pdf
- E.86 National Grid Gas Consultation Response 19 05 2023.pdf
- E.87 MoD Safeguarding Consultation Response 24 05 2023.pdf
- E.88 Historic England Consultation Response 21 05 2023.pdf
- E.89 Oxfordshire County Council Landscape and Arboriculture Advisor Response 25 05 2023.pdf
- E.90 BBOWT Consulltation Response 31 05 2023.pdf
- E.91 Didcot Town Council Consultation Response 31 05 2023.pdf
- E.92 Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology Consultation Response 31 05 2023.pdf
- E.93 OCC Councillor Hicks Comments July 2023.pdf
- E.94 Oxfordshire County Council Rights of Way Consultation Response 24 11 2022.pdf
- E.95 Oxfordshire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority Response 02 03 2023.pdf
- E.96 Public representations to September 2023 1.pdf
- E.97 Public representations to September 2023 2.pdf
- E.98 Public representations to September 2023 3.pdf
- E.99 Public representations to September 2023 4.pdf
- E.100 Public representations to September 2023 5.pdf
- E.101 Jan 2022 - Transport Development Control (TDC) Interim Comments.pdf
- E.102 Feb 2022 TDC Response.pdf
- E.103 July TDC comments (including appendix on model audit).pdf
- E.104 Feb 2023 - TDC Comments.pdf

F - Planning and Regulation Committee Reports and Minutes

- F.1 Agenda Reports Pack July 2023
- F.2 Printed Draft Minutes July 2023
- F.3 Addenda July 2023
- F.4 Supplement Addenda 2 – Written Statements by Registered Speakers July 2023

- F.5 Agenda Reports Pack - Sep 2023
- F.6 Printed Minutes - Sep 2023
- F.7 Addenda - Sep 2023

G - Planning Policy Documents

- G.01.00 South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan Dec-20
- G.01.01 Adopted Policies Layers Map Dec 202 North and South
- G.01.1 TRA06.1 Technical Note – Evaluation of Transport Impacts, Jan-15
- G.01.2 TRA06.2 Evaluation of Transport Impacts Stage 1, Oct-16
- G.01.3 TRA06.3 Evaluation of Transport Impacts Stage 2 - Development Scenarios and Mitigation Testing, Mar-17
- G.01.4 TRA06.4 Evaluation of Transport Impacts Stage 3 - Development Scenarios and Mitigation Testing, Oct-17
- G.01.5 TRA06.5 Evaluation of Transport Impacts Stage 3 - Development Scenarios and Mitigation Testing Addendum (updated Scenario 5b Results), Jan-19
- G.01.6 TRA06.6 Evaluation of Transport Impacts Stage 3 – 5c Addendum (updated on 22 July 2020), Mar-19
- G.01.7 Explanation of Change to TRA06.6, Jul-20
- G.01.8 Report on the Examination of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2034, Nov-20
- G.01.9 South Oxfordshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Apr-20
- G.02.01 Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan Part 1, Dec-16
- G.02.02 Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan Part 1: Appendices, Dec-16
- G.02.03 TRA02 Evaluation of Transport Impacts Study Final Report, Nov-14
- G.02.04 TRA02.1 Evaluation of Transport Impacts Study Final Report Appendices, Nov-14
- G.02.05 Report on the Examination into Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 1, Nov-16
- G.02.06 Vale of White Horse Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Dec-16
- G.02.07 Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan Part 2, Oct-19
- G.02.08 Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan Part 2: Appendices, Oct-19
- G.02.09 TRA06 Evaluation of Transport Impacts – Stage 1 – Part 1, Mar-17
- G.02.10 TRA06 Evaluation of Transport Impacts – Stage 1 – Part 2, Mar-17

- G.02.11 TRA06 Evaluation of Transport Impacts – Stage 1 – Part 3, Mar-17
- G.02.12 TRA06 Evaluation of Transport Impacts – Stage 2, Oct-17
- G.02.13 Report on the Examination of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part Two, Jun-19
- G.02.14 Vale of White Horse Infrastructure Delivery Plan (LPP2 update), Feb-18
- G.03 OCC Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- G.04.0 OCC Local Transport Connectivity Plan
- G.04.1 Didcot Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Dec-23
- G.04.2 OCC Active Travel Strategy Jul-22
- G.04.3 OCC Freight and Logistics Strategy Jul-22
- G.04.4 OCC Mobility Hub Strategy Jul-23
- G.04.5 Abingdon Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Feb-23
- G.05.0 OCC Local Transport Plan 4
- G.05.1 LTP 4 Banbury, Bicester, Carterton, Science Vale & Science Vale Cycle Strategy and Witney Area Strategies, 2.16
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 01, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 02, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 03, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 04, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 05, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 06, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 07, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 08, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 09, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 10, Oct-17
- G.06 Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan - Chapter 11, Oct-17
- G.07 Culham Neighbourhood Plan
- G.08 Burcot and Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Plan - December 2022
- G.09-0 Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan
- G.09-1 Sutton Courtenay revised version following referendum 11 April 2024
- G.10 Vale of White Horse Design Guide SPD 2015
- G.11 South Oxfordshire Didcot Town centre SPD May 2009
- G.12 South Oxfordshire Design SPD - November 2016
- G.13 Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Joint Design Guide - Jun-22
- G.15 South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment SPD Jul-03
- G.16 South Oxfordshire Local Plan Examination Note on Matter 10 – Didcot Garden Town – Explanation of traffic modelling figures - Aug-20
- G.17 Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study Strategic Report - June 21

- G.18 Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Joint Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation (Regulation 18 Part 2), January 2024
- G.19 Towards Fusion Energy 2023 - The next stage of the UK Fusion Energy Strategy
- G.20 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2023

I - Cabinet Approvals and Officer Decision Notice

- I.1 Report to Cabinet and Cabinet Resolution Oct 2019
- I.2 Report to Cabinet and Resolution July 2020
- I.3 Report to Cabinet and Cabinet Resolution March 2022
- I.4 Report to Cabinet and Cabinet resolution June 2022
- I.5 Report to Cabinet and Cabinet Resolution Jul 2022
- I.6 Officer Decision Notices

L - Statements of Case in relation to the called-in Planning Aplication

- L.1 Oxfordshire County Council as Applicant.zip
- L.2 Oxfordshire County Council as Local Planning Authority.zip
- L.3 Vale of White Horse District Council
- L.4 South Oxfordshire District Council
- L.5 United Kingdom Atomic Energy Agency *
- L.6 Neighbouring Parish Council Joint Committee *
- L.7 Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably
- L.8 Mays Properties Limited
- L.9 East Hendred Parish Council

N - Representations on the Called-in Planning Application

- N.01 Catherine Small, 8 September 2023
- N.02 Jerome Pearce and Tiffany Cameron, 8 September 2023
- N.03 Thrings LLP obo Mrs Jacqueline Mason, 20 September 2023
- N.04 Anthony and Gwendoline Mockler, 22 September 2023
- N.05 Vicky Johnson (1), 24 September 2023
- N.06 Didcot Town Council 25 September 2023
- N.07 Luke Marion obo Oxford Bus Company, 26 September 2023
- N.08 Vicky Johnson (2), 28 September 2023
- N.09 Christopher Owen, 28 September 2023
- N.10 Ian Cook, 29 September 2023
- N.11 Western Valley Parish Council, 29 September 2023
- N.12 Daniel Scharf, 29 September 2023
- N.13 Drayton St Leonard Parish Council, 30 September 2023
- N.14 Ian Palmer, 30 September 2023
- N.15 Councillor Sarah James, 1 October 2023

- N.16 Walker Morris LLP obo FCC Environment (UK) Limited, 2 October 2023
- N.17 Mays Properties Limited, 2 October 2023
- N.18 The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2 October 2023
- N.19 Andrew P. Jones, 3 October 2023
- N.20 Frances Reid, 3 October 2023
- N.21 Greg O'Broin obo Appleford Parish Council and Neighbouring Parish Council Joint Committee, 3 October 2023
- N.22 Adrian Wear, 3 October 2023
- N.23 Victoria Shepherd, 3 October 2023
- N.24 Chris Church obo Oxford Friends of the Earth, 3 October 2023
- N.25 Robin Draper, 4 October 2023
- N.26 Oxfordshire Roads Action Alliance, 4 October 2023
- N.27 Carter Jonas obo UK Atomic Energy Agency, 4 October 2023
- N.28 Maggie and Daren Atkins, 5 October 2023
- N.29 Graham Smith, 6 October 2023
- N.30 Councillor Charlie Hicks, 25 October 2023

O - Technical Notes produced following the pre-inquiry meeting on 9 November 2023

- O.1 OCC Applicant's Technical Note concerning Environmental Statement, 14 December 2023
- O.2 OCC as Local Planning Authority's technical note in respect of LPA's "remaining concerns" including Annex 29 December 2023
- O.3 OCC as Local Planning Authority's technical note in respect of design of Didcot Science Bridge including Annexes 29 December 2023

Q - Statements of Common Ground (SOCG) and Conditions

- Q.01 SOCG between Oxfordshire County Council as Local Planning Authority and as Applicant 2 November 2023
- Q.02 Supplementary SOCG between Oxfordshire County Council as Local Planning Authority and as Applicant 9 January 2024
- Q.03 DIdcot Garden Town HIF 1 scheme application - conditions document January 2024 with SODC VWH Observations
- Q.04 Comments by POETS on Didcot Garden Town HIF 1 schemeLPA Conditions
- Q.05-1 Inspector's Note on Conditions 10.04.24
- Q.05-2 Inspector comments on conditions. 10.4.24
- Q.05-3 Condition Numbers Comparison Document
- Q.06 OCC as LPA - comments on conditions as presented 19.04.24
- Q.07-1 Detailed Restoration Plan for Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site

- Q.07-2 Decision Notice with Approval Letter 15.08.19 for Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site
- Q.08-1 Bridge Farm Quarry Phases 1-4b Aftercare Scheme revised 20.04.16
- Q.08-2 Bridge Farm Quarry Phases 1-4b Decision Notice 16.05.19
- Q.08-3 Bridge Farm Quarry Phases 1-4b Approved Restoration Scheme
- Q.09 Existing Planning Permission & Restoration Plans - Bridge Farm Quarry phases 5-7.zip
- Q.10-1 Suggested Additional Condition by POETS 21.04.24
- Q.10-2 22.04.24 Revision to Condition Submitted by POETS 21.04.24
- Q.11 LPA response to POETs Liaison Meeting Condition
- Q.12 Conditions Table 08.05.24
- Q.12 RWE email 8.5.2024 re conditions

R - Inspectors' Notes

- R.01 Pre-Inquiry Meeting Summary Note 13 November 2023
- R.02 Inspector’s Note dated 21 December 2023
- R.03 Inspector’s Note dated 12 January 2024
- R.04 Inspector’s Note dated 18 January 2024
- R.05 Inspector’s Note dated 25 January 2024
- R.06 Inspector’s Note dated 6 February 2024

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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RIGHT TO CHALLENGE THE DECISION IN THE HIGH COURT

These notes are provided for guidance only and apply only to challenges under the legislation specified. If you require further advice on making any High Court challenge, or making an application for Judicial Review, you should consult a solicitor or other advisor or contact the Crown Office at the Royal Courts of Justice, King's Bench Division, Strand, London, WC2 2LL (0207 947 6000).

The attached decision is final unless it is successfully challenged in the Courts. The Secretary of State cannot amend or interpret the decision. It may be redetermined by the Secretary of State only if the decision is quashed by the Courts. However, if it is redetermined, it does not necessarily follow that the original decision will be reversed.

SECTION 1: PLANNING APPEALS AND CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The decision may be challenged by making an application for permission to the High Court under section 288 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the TCP Act).

Challenges under Section 288 of the TCP Act

With the permission of the High Court under section 288 of the TCP Act, decisions on called-in applications under section 77 of the TCP Act (planning), appeals under section 78 (planning) may be challenged. Any person aggrieved by the decision may question the validity of the decision on the grounds that it is not within the powers of the Act or that any of the relevant requirements have not been complied with in relation to the decision. An application for leave under this section must be made within six weeks from the day after the date of the decision.

SECTION 2: ENFORCEMENT APPEALS

Challenges under Section 289 of the TCP Act

Decisions on recovered enforcement appeals under all grounds can be challenged under section 289 of the TCP Act. To challenge the enforcement decision, permission must first be obtained from the Court. If the Court does not consider that there is an arguable case, it may refuse permission. Application for leave to make a challenge must be received by the Administrative Court within 28 days of the decision, unless the Court extends this period.

SECTION 3: AWARDS OF COSTS

A challenge to the decision on an application for an award of costs which is connected with a decision under section 77 or 78 of the TCP Act can be made under section 288 of the TCP Act if permission of the High Court is granted.

SECTION 4: INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

Where an inquiry or hearing has been held any person who is entitled to be notified of the decision has a statutory right to view the documents, photographs and plans listed in the appendix to the Inspector's report of the inquiry or hearing within 6 weeks of the day after the date of the decision. If you are such a person and you wish to view the documents you should get in touch with the office at the address from which the decision was issued, as shown on the letterhead on the decision letter, quoting the reference number and stating the day and time you wish to visit. At least 3 days notice should be given, if possible.