Improving transport along the A40 Corridor
Consultation response by the Eynsham Planning Improvement Campaign (EPIC)
30th December 2018

To whom it may concern,

Key points in this response

1. There can be no congestion solution and Greenhouse Gas reduction without coordinating travel and land use and demand management of car travel
2. Funding for transport improvements is utterly inadequate for current problems, let alone the future
3. Phase 1 should have a continuous bus lane to Wolvercote roundabout
4. Is the proposed scheme big enough to have an impact?

Managing Large Scale Growth in Oxfordshire.
Specific comments on the proposed A 40 improvements must be set in a wider context because of the systemic nature of movement and networks. Effective transport proposals by the County Council (OCC) should be considered as part of the countywide network, and integrated with land use. Until now these interdependent processes have been separated. As the District Council's housing allocations have already been established, is this closing the stable door after the horse has bolted? The sequence of land use planning then transport provision is back to front.

Any A40 improvements, whether major or minor, must be fully integrated with proposed growth in the corridor, the dominating role of Oxford, feeder roads and settlements. This much appears to be understood by the Council officers. Given the proposed quantum of residential development along the corridor and in the county, even the most optimistic estimate of national and local funding for mitigating transport improvements is totally inadequate to meet the challenge of congestion and sustainable movement now, let alone in future.

Travel is one of the key generators of Greenhouse Gas emissions (GHE). The 2016 Office of National Statistics data shows that travel is the fastest growing source of GHE.
Increased road capacity creates increased travel demand, and does not solve congestion, GHE and pollution in the medium and long term. So how are the Districts and OCC planning to reduce demand for travel in general, and car travel in particular?

When a structure plan authority, OCC rationally chose the Country Towns strategy to, inter alia, protect Oxford and its setting. The Country Towns were to grow as "balanced" settlements (jobs were to match housing growth thereby, in theory, reducing the propensity for commuting). In parallel, employment growth in Oxford was to be controlled. Nonetheless, Oxford has retained and grown its dominance for jobs, high level services and recreation. Hence the unsustainable commuting flows from its sub region. Along the A40, this spatial imbalance is made worse by the absence of a congestion free public transport connection (the only Country Town reliant exclusively on road access).

If there is to be sustainable future for the county and beyond, job and service growth in the City must be controlled. The City Council's planning decisions in privileging employment, rather than housing, has manifestly ignored this strategic policy. There must be more housing in Oxford, but not on the huge scale being promoted, given the massively lower predicted population growth (ONS 2016) both within the built up area and by reviewing the inner boundary of the Green Belt to release suitable land for housing. This is feasible given that the Oxford greenbelt is wider than that of any other city.

The consequence of these proposed strategic actions, as well as income inequality, is the displacement of lower income workers to the peripheral settlements and costly, time wasting and unhealthy commuting across a tightly drawn Green Belt.

The existing spatial structure, network and consequent movement patterns are already deeply problematic. How will the county network cope with the even larger scale development of the Oxford Cambridge Arc?

With current and future traffic, and the increasing dominance of Oxford, do the proposed A40 proposals get close to the necessary scale for resolving the congestion, GHE, pollution and time waste of travel? In principle, the proposals are not unhelpful, but nowhere near big enough.

Detailed Comments on the Proposed A40 Scheme

The comments follow the numbering of the Exhibition.

1. If the proposed Science Transit Park and Ride (P and R) is to effect a significant modal shift (from car to bus), the proposed bus lane should be continuous from the P and R to the Wolvercote Roundabout. New bridges at Duke's Cut should be part of Phase1. Officers know that modal shift is most successful when the alternative bus journey is quicker, more predictable and more comfortable than the car. A continuous congestion free bus lane from P and R to destination is therefore essential.

A P and R scheme was previously rejected by the Department of Transport because it did not meet the minimum cost benefit criterion (presumably set by the Treasury). What has changed to make the current scheme acceptable for Government funding?

No housing at the Garden Village (GV) and Eynsham Western Extension should be occupied until the P and R and bus lane are working.

2. Background

2.1. A40 congestion constrains economic growth, productivity and prosperity in West Oxfordshire. It also adversely affects the lives, health and amenity of those using the A 40 and living next to it. OCC, the District Councils and Government are all nominally committed to reducing GHE. Managing travel is probably one of the most important policies for reducing Global Warming, which in the medium term is the most dangerous threat to humanity.

2.2. Objectives

These objectives are unexceptionable, but must be implemented.

Reducing the propensity and demand for car travel should be an objective, which is best achieved by coordinated land use, design and transport planning.

3. A40 Strategy

Increasing road capacity by modal shift may bring some short-term congestion relief. Managing demand for car travel in the longer term is more effective (for example, by better spatial balance of home and jobs).

The proposals seem to accept that central Government and the market determine our future. Local authorities have become handmaids of the market, mitigating, if successful, the worst effects of growth.

4. Aims of the Scheme
Again unexceptionable.

The key aim must be the reduction of demand for car travel. No foreseeable network proposal would resolve the movement problem without demand management.

The proposals are not objectionable in principle: necessary but woefully insufficient in the longer term. As noted above, the road capacity released by modal shift at the P and R would be taken up by more cars in a few years unless, for example, there is control of public and private parking and /or road pricing in Oxford.

The actual and perceived congestion is worse in the morning peak compared with the afternoon peak. Car drivers would be aware of only marginally improved westbound bus journeys when deciding on modal shift for eastbound journeys (Phase1). The east and westbound bus lanes should be considered together.

4.1 Travel Problems
The text does not necessarily correspond to the diagram. Oxford City comprises, among others, the City Centre (Woodstock and Banbury Roads), Headington (e.g. the hospitals) and East Oxford (employment areas).
The diagram could usefully show the network split/ trafffic volume at the Wolvercote Roundabout between A44 northbound (to A34, A44, Kidlington), southbound Woodstock Road and eastbound A40 Sunderland Avenue.

4.2 As for the original park and rides, what provision has been made to enlarge the proposed P and R if and when demand exceeds capacity?
Does the bus company have the necessary capacity to increase the S2 and S7 services?
There must be no reduction in the S1 service to enable an increased A40 service.

4.3. Buses on the proposed eastbound bus lane do not have priority at the junctions. How would this affect bus times? Have these crossovers been modelled?

The existing Eynsham roundabout is congested and would delay bus passage, especially in the afternoon peak, without an approach bus lane and priority.

Has the interaction between the rate and timing of modal interception at the P and R and flow/ delay at Wolvercote Roundabout been modelled for the morning peak? As the A40 traffic is above capacity at the morning, what is the threshold P and R interception rate to reduce traffic sufficiently to improve flow significantly? During the summer holidays, eastbound peak flow appears to fall sufficiently to reduce Wolvercote queues to an acceptable degree.
Is the P and R big enough to make a difference to congestion now and in future with much greater traffic volume?

As noted above, terminating the eastbound bus lane at Duke's Cut (Phase 1) would discourage modal shift at the P and R if the bus were delayed by a continuous queue until the Wolvercote roundabout. Therefore, an uninterrupted eastbound bus lane should be part of Phase1.
The Cassington and Eynsham traffic lights and particularly the Eynsham roundabout cause tailbacks for westbound traffic in the afternoon (for a longer period than the peak). Should programmed traffic lights be installed at the Eynsham roundabout to ease westbound congestion in the afternoon?
Would there be westbound bus priority at these interruptions in Phases 1 and 2?

Oxford North (Gateway) and proposed development to the north would significantly increase traffic on the A44 leg of the Wolvercote roundabout (and the A40 if a new vehicular access were

built between the A 34flyover and Wolvercote roundabout as shown in the Exhibition). How would the increased traffic and delays be managed? Increased queues and delays are inevitable. Would there be bus priority for two park and rides at the Wolvercote roundabout especially during the morning peak?

Location of the Proposed P and R
Officers know, from research and the existing park and rides, that a park and ride is most successful when it meets these criteria:
* located where an inbound queue starts during peak periods;
* where it can be connected to the preferred destination by a continuous dedicated bus lane (or public transport service);
* when there are perceptible and significant improvements in journey speed and reliability compared with the car;
* where car parking at the destination is controlled (noted above); and
* with sufficient parking at the park and ride.
Does the proposed P and R meet these success criteria?

There are major criticisms of the P and R's proposed location near Eynsham. Many have suggested that it should be further west at Witney. If there were a continuous, dedicated bus lane from Witney to Wolvercote, this location could be effective. Nevertheless, as Witney is a major origin for many A 40 users, it would be preferable to encourage use of the scheduled bus services from home to destination rather than driving to an edge of town park and ride. Research has shown that park and rides do not reduce the total car miles travelled compared with use of scheduled bus services. People drive to the park and ride rather than using the bus from home. This environmental defect may be less evident with the second generation of remote park and rides.

4.4 Funding
Phase1: is the £35m guaranteed?
At minimum, the eastbound bus lane should go to the Wolvercote roundabout (see above).

5. Environmental Appraisal
Presumably undertaken objectively.

7. Design
7.2/ 7.3 The proposed scheme should take full account of the proposed Garden Village (2000 dwellings) and Eynsham Western Extension (1000 dwellings). Additional vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist access would have to be provided for these proposals and must be part of the proposed A40 scheme. Pedestrian and cyclist connections to the proposed P and R should foster sustainable travel rather than car.

These details cannot be agreed until there is an outline layout design for the two large proposed residential areas. In this respect, the A40 scheme is premature.

The proposed A40 scheme shows light controlled pedestrian crossings. Are these suitable and sufficient for safely connecting the GV and Eynsham?

Detailed P and R Design
As noted above, design should be coordinated with access to and from the GV and Western Extension.

How would these big developments be connected with the A 40:
* at the proposed P and R roundabout, or
* via a new roundabout(s)?

Could buses from the west access the P and R by a segregated bus lane at the roundabout?
Could the existing lay by be improved for westbound traffic to by pass the proposed roundabout and congestion?
The A40 between the proposed P and R roundabout and the existing Eynsham roundabout should be speed restricted for the safety of pedestrians and cyclist crossing the road.

8. Journey Time
The time saving for the P and R bus compared with the car is not significant. Is it large enough to encourage major modal shift?

What is the time saving for Phase 2 with a continuous bus lane?

9. Phase2
A continuous eastbound bus lane and Community Path should be part of Phase1. The Path appears to have a high cost benefit.

Have the time/ cost/ speed benefits of an extended dual carriageway been modelled?

If there is a capacity problem at Barnard Gate, there is a road capacity problem along the entire single carriageway A 40.

Is the A 40 congestion primarily caused by a capacity shortfall or interruptions to flow because of traffic lights and roundabouts?

If there is another roundabout(s) west of Eynsham to serve the large developments, traffic flow would be interrupted and queues could form in the morning and afternoon peaks.

The cost benefit of dualling the A40 would be poor. Its opportunity cost would be high. It would not solve the congestion problem, merely moving it further east in the morning.

It would be beneficial in moving the morning queue to the P and R, and thereby encouraging more modal shift.

An eastbound dedicated bus lane from Witney may be more cost effective.

10. Bus Lanes
Phase 1 bus lane would encounter delays after Duke's Cut even without the adjacent development to the north.

11.2. Dualling would increase road capacity, but would not reduce congestion because of the delays at the new and existing roundabouts and existing traffic lights.
Eynsham Roundabout
Would there be bus priority where the proposed bus lane joins the eastbound and westbound carriageway?

12.2. The westbound bus lane should be completed as soon as possible. The phasing of the Casssington lights should be programmed to increase time for through traffic.
The significant queues for westbound traffic at the Eynsham roundabout during the afternoon should be ameliorated. Has OCC considered programmable traffic lights?

13.2. As noted above, the proposed eastbound bus lane should be continuous, despite the cost, to encourage modal shift.

Oxford North, because of its size and location at the most congested part of the network, would have a critical and long-term impact on access to Oxford and travel along the A 40. The opportunities for highway improvements are restricted and congestion would be extremely difficult to resolve.

Proposals Not Considered in the A 40 Scheme

Although increased road capacity creates its own demand, there are exceptions. OCC should reinstate the eastbound link road from the A40 to the A44 roundabout north of the A34 roundabout. Traffic turning left at the Wolvercote roundabout would thereby be removed from the most congested part of the A40 and A44.

Without the "Tin hat" scheme, there is no solution to the increasingly severe traffic congestion in this part of the network. Has a road corridor been reserved in Cherwell District Council's Local Plan proposals?

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EPIC response
Prepared by Tony Bovey in consultation with EPIC team