

Oxfordshire County Council
Speedwell House
Speedwell Street
Oxford
OX1 1NE

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Date: 06 October 2015

Dear Sir,

**Connecting Oxfordshire: Investing in the A40
Consultation on Long-Term Options, September 2015**

Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the County Council's work on the longer term options for the A40. This is a very timely consultation and the District Council welcomes the effort that the County Council is putting in to develop a long-term strategy for this important road.

The A40 through West Oxfordshire is congested every working day, causing misery for many people and restricting the economic potential of West Oxfordshire. It is a major issue for our district and only a long-term solution will solve the problem. While the currently planned £35 million investment is very welcome, this is not enough by itself.

The problems on the A40 need to be seen in the light of the substantial growth planned in the County. The Northern Gateway development will create a major new employment node at the end of the corridor, and there are a significant number of new homes planned in West Oxfordshire. In combination with the new Oxford Parkway Station this will significantly increase the demand for travel along the A40.

It is helpful to see the agreed investment already identified for the A40 corridor on one diagram. This includes important improvements to access for Carterton and Witney, improvements to the road network to the north of Oxford and significant improvements to public transport. However as the Local Transport Plan itself recognises these improvements are unlikely to wholly resolve the current capacity issues on A40 let alone deal with the impact of future developments in West Oxfordshire.

In your consultation feedback form you ask for views on each of the options that you have identified, and which scheme or combination of options should be given top priority.

The District Council is of the opinion that the A40 Dual Carriageway option is the appropriate long term solution. It is appreciated that this will require a rationalisation in the number and nature of accesses joining the road. There also needs to be further exploration of the additional 'North Oxford' bypass to overcome the inherent constraints at Wolvercote and Cutteslowe Roundabouts.

The A40 Dual Carriageway option should be part of a wider package of measures which will also enhance public transport, cycling and walking, as well as motor vehicle travel along the A40 corridor.

This is important because of the need to manage traffic and travel demand in Oxford and to offer choice. There is limited car parking at some key destinations in Oxford, and there will be changes in travel patterns caused by the Northern Gateway development and the new Oxford Parkway Station. In particular the District Council asks the County Council to investigate park and ride opportunities further along the A40 at Witney, and also to bring forward the ideas in the Local Transport Plan to reconfigure bus services so that effective services are introduced to the Oxford Parkway Station, to the Hospitals and to the employment areas in the eastern area of Oxford.

The District Council's comments on each scheme are as follows:

A40 Bus Lane

This option is the cheapest option and appears to be the option most easily deliverable. However it would not significantly increase the capacity of the road for cars and freight vehicles. Therefore the District Council does not see this option as the long term solution. To get the full benefits for bus users, and increase the modal share of public transport, it would need to be accompanied by reconfigured bus services enhancing connections to key destinations in Oxford.

Guided Busway

The Guided Busway at £165 million is significantly more expensive than the A40 Bus Lane option yet it doesn't appear to offer any significant advantages in journey time. For these reasons the District Council does not support this option at all. It is not clear where park and ride facilities would be located and this option might require significant changes to bus routes in Witney given the start of the busway at Ducklington Roundabout. Presumably this would reduce services using Oxford Hill and therefore disadvantage users in northern and eastern areas of Witney.

A40 Dual Carriageway

The District Council strongly supports the A40 Dual Carriageway option. This is the appropriate long term solution for the A40 as it significantly increases the roads capacity and would benefit both freight and passenger vehicles. It would also improve travel times and journey reliability along the A40 corridor and would stimulate economic development in West Oxfordshire.

The highway network in the North Oxford area also needs further need enhancement. The A40-A44 Strategic Link Road is an essential project and this may need to be extended into a wider North Oxford bypass. As mentioned before the A40 Dual Carriageway should be part of a wider package of measures including public transport, cycling and walking.

Witney – Oxford Train

This is the most expensive option at £285 million. It would provide a direct link to Oxford Railway Station but would not enhance accessibility to other important destinations in northern and eastern areas of Oxford. The frequency of trains will be restricted by the extent of single track and would only allow 1 to 2 trains an hour in each direction.

It appears likely that this option would not lead to a significant reduction in congestion on the A40. The District Council does not support this option at all.

Witney – Oxford Tram

This is another expensive option at £240 million. This option would offer improved frequencies in comparison to the train option but has some significant drawbacks. It would not link directly to Oxford City Centre unless on street running was included at an additional cost of £100 million. It would also not connect directly with destinations in the eastern area of Oxford. The District Council does not support this option at all.

Other Comments

It is not clear from the promotional material which other options may have been considered by the County Council. The District Council is aware of the Witney to Oxford Monorail concept that is being promoted by WestOx Monorail Ltd. It would be helpful if the County Council could carry out a comparative analysis of this option, if it hasn't done this already, in order that all reasonable options are considered. However, such an analysis is unlikely to change the District Council's view that the A40 Dual Carriageway is the appropriate long term solution.

It is important that the County Council keeps to its timetable and reaches a conclusion in spring 2016 on the long term strategy for the A40. A number of significant decisions will be taken in the near future on the details of the Local Growth Fund package and on planning for Oxford's unmet housing need. These decisions need to take account of a longer term strategy for the A40.

The District Council would like to work with the County Council to help put forward a strong case for government investment as a key part of the funding package for the long-term solution. The District Council can explore the potential for developer contributions through the Community Infrastructure Levy, or from Section 106 agreements, to supplement the investment from other sources.

The District Council would also like to work with the County Council on the details of the Local Growth Fund Scheme in order to coordinate the design for this with its planning for the area.

If you have any queries or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,