

NOTE

Project name: Access to Witney
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Prepared By: Bal Tiwana and Gemma Care
Subject: **Access to Witney Online Public Engagement Summary Note (v3)**

1. Overview of online public engagement process

- 1.1. The A40 Programme team undertook an online public engagement exercise for Access to Witney between 10 May and 7 June 2021 (inclusive) which ran in parallel with the A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor engagement exercise. Both schemes form part of the A40 Improvement programme.
- 1.2. Table 1.1 below summarises the key activities and publicity undertaken as part of the public engagement process to support the Access to Witney proposals.

Table 1.1 Online public engagement timeline

Date	Activity
5 May 2021	OCC A40 Improvement webpage go-live date
10 May 2021	Online exhibition go-live date
10 May 2021	OCC consultation portal for submitting feedback go-live date
13 May 2021	Online public engagement publicised in 'YourOxfordshire' resident's newsletter
14 May 2021	Paper copies of exhibition boards delivered to four local libraries for public display (Eynsham, Burford, Carterton and Witney)
15 & 19 May 2021	Outdoor advertising displayed in Kidlington, Witney and Cheltenham
18 May 2021	Live webinar event no. 1 (including Q&A)
22 May 2021	Live webinar event no. 2 (including Q&A)
27 May 2021	Decision to extend the deadline for comments to 7 June 2021
7 June 2021	OCC consultation portal for submitting feedback closes

- 1.3. The project team established a new 'A40 Improvements' webpage which provided an overview of the six A40 Improvement schemes and access to a dedicated Access to Witney webpage, virtual exhibition and frequently asked questions webpage.
- 1.4. The virtual exhibition provided the opportunity for participants to complete a feedback form online via the OCC consultation portal. A dedicated email address was also set up to provide the opportunity for comments and questions to be submitted to the project team.
- 1.5. The project team also held two live online webinar events hosted via Microsoft Teams to give participants the opportunity to ask questions to members of the team directly. This aimed to recreate as far as possible a traditional 'in-person' public exhibition while complying with the Government's Covid-19 guidelines.

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- 1.6. The following measures were put in place to ensure that participants without access to the internet or experienced issues with accessing materials online had the opportunity to view and comment on the proposals:
- The public engagement was advertised in print ('Oxford Mail')
 - The advertisement included a telephone number to request printed copies of the online exhibition boards and feedback form.
 - A Word version of the online feedback form was emailed out to stakeholders on request for completion offline.
 - A PDF copy of the online exhibition boards was emailed out to stakeholders on request to print the information at home.

2. Overview of participation

- 2.1. Key statistics on participation in the online public engagement are summarised below:
- At least 6,321 visitors to the A40 Improvements webpages. Just under 5,000 of these visitors were unique users.*
 - On average, visitors spent over two minutes on the A40 Improvements webpages, which indicates that visitors engaged with the content.
 - Visitors viewed two or more webpages per session on average, which again indicates that visitors engaged with the content.
 - At least 175 individuals clicked through to the Access to Witney virtual consultation portal.*
 - 39 feedback form responses via the virtual consultation portal.
 - 15 email responses.
 - 18 sign-ups/attendees of live webinar events.
- 2.2. It is important to note that the actual number of visits to the A40 Improvement webpages and the online exhibition is likely to be significantly higher than the reported results.* This is because the figures recorded by Google Analytics only represent those visitors who accepted cookies on entering the site; typically, only 10-20% of visitors accept cookies.
- 2.3. The social media activity records indicate that the actual number of visitors to the A40 Improvements webpages was higher than the Google Analytics data suggests:
- Facebook adverts generated 10,000 clicks throughs to the A40 Improvements landing webpage.
 - Facebook adverts were viewed by at least 100,000 users and adverts were targeted to areas that use the A40.
 - The Next Door post generated just under 6,700 'impressions'. Next Door is a local social channel that allows posts to be targeted at the local level (street/parish level).
 - YourOxfordshire messages generated 807 click throughs to the A40 Improvements landing webpage.
 - Email notification about the online exhibition generated 50 clicks throughs to the A40 Improvements landing webpage.

3. Summary of responses

- 3.1. Responses on the proposals were received via two channels:
- 39 feedback form responses submitted via the consultation exhibition.
 - 15 queries and responses submitted via email.
- 3.2. A number of responses were received from key stakeholders including:

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- West Oxfordshire District Council – The Council strongly supports the principle of the proposal and the timely progress being made by the County Council in taking the project forward. Having reviewed the preferred scheme, the District Council is strongly supportive.
- South Leigh Parish Council – Concerned that the scheme as proposed will: cause rat running through the village, lead to increased light, noise and emissions population; lead to an increased risk of flooding; and loss of biodiversity. SLPC has also highlighted that parishioners have raised concerns about pedestrian and cycle access through the proposed Shores Green interchange towards Oxford Hill. Questions also raised during webinar and follow-up email setting out the questions.
- Witney Town Council (unverified) – Supportive of the proposal.
- The Mawle Trustees and the Trustees of the Northfield Life Interest Settlement – The Trustees own the land that comprises the East Witney Strategic Development Area. This includes the area of land required to deliver the A40 Shores Green ‘off slip’. The Trustees welcome the County Council’s ‘Preferred Option’, which includes a simple T-Junction ‘off-slip’. Also welcomed are the proposed improvements to foot and cycle connectivity to the A40 itself.
- Walker Family – Object to Preferred Option 2A - the scoring system used by AECOM and OCC to appraise the alternatives are flawed. Preference for Option 17, which is “simpler, greener and cheaper” – this opinion is supported by Graham Soame, SLPC Member and others.
- Cllr Duncan Enwright – Strong support for the scheme, however considers that it is important that the proposed design does not increase traffic through South Leigh. Also questions whether Option 17 could be altered to ensure less queuing at roundabout.

3.3. Other responses can be briefly summarised as follows:

- Support for an alternative option (17).
- Concerns about increase traffic, including at Oxford Hill, Bridge Street - the residents of Cogges and Madley Park estates will still drive into Witney.
- Witney-Oxford train line should be given more consideration.
- Concerns about the accessibility of online consultation.

Online feedback form resultsViews on Access to Witney

3.4. A summary of the key themes arising from the project-specific feedback form questions (nos. 7 – 11) is provided below.

Q7. What is your view on our preferred design layout to install west-facing slip roads at the A40/B4022 Shores Green Junction with signalised junctions?**Summary of Responses**

- There is majority support for preferred design layout from respondents (54%) including from Cllr Duncan Enwright and an unnamed Town Councillor for Witney.
- The most popular recurring themes for comment were that improvements were already overdue at the site location (mentioned in 6/34 comments) and stating support for the principle of removing traffic from the town centre (mentioned in 5/34 comments).
- For those voicing concerns, the most recurring themes were:
 - The preference for a roundabout led highway design (mentioned in 5/34 comments) as they felt a signalised junction would lead to more traffic jams (mentioned in 5/34 comments); and

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- Concern for road safety was mentioned in 4 out of 34 comments. However, a similar number of commenters felt a junction would provide a safer layout in comparison to a roundabout lead arrangement (3/34).

Table 3.1 Q7 Response Overview

	Number	%
Strong Support	8	21%
Support	13	33%
Neutral	4	10%
Minor Concerns	6	15%
Significant concerns	7	18%
Don't know	1	3%
Total	39	100%

	Support	Concerned
Support split	54%	33%
Number of commenters	34	87%

Table 3.2 Q7 Recurring Themes

Theme	Mentions	Rank
Delivery of improvements to Shores Green Junction overdue.	6	1
Supports principal removal of traffic from town centre	5	2
Prefers inclusion of a roundabout	5	3
Believe traffic light junctions will lead to traffic	5	4
Concern for road safety	4	5
Layout provides improved safety compared to a roundabout	3	6
No Comment - Support	3	7
Supports increased access to Witney/A40	2	8
Efficient design	2	9
Impact on High Cogges	2	10
No Comment - Neutral	2	11
Requests further details on establishing initial options for testing.	1	12
Questions whether there is pedestrian demand within the area.	1	13
Concerned about traffic backing up on slip road	1	14
Suggests priority junction at end of slip road	1	15
Concerns in regard to carbon emissions	1	16

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Theme	Mentions	Rank
Concern that proposals conflict with South Leigh Neighbourhood Plan Policies	1	17
Concern that A40 traffic will prevent access from slip roads	1	18
Loss of agricultural land	1	19
Wants a proposal which affects Carterton	1	20
Denies there is a problem at present.	1	21
Concern South Leigh will become a "rat run"	1	22

8. What is your view on the alternative design layout options, which include roundabouts instead of signalised junctions?

Summary of Responses

- There were mixed responses with no clear majority due to a high proportion of neutral opinions (7/39).
- For those who commented, there was a strong support for a proposal to include a roundabout (mentioned in 16/30 comments). There is no definitive support for a single alternative proposal, although Cllr Duncan Enright questioned whether there could be amends to option 17 which could make it more effective for managing traffic as it otherwise performed strongly as an improvement option.
- Some commenters were concerned that a roundabout lead layout is less safe than an alternative (mentioned in 5/30 comments).
- A limited number stated that proposals may have a greater impact on High Cogges and South Leigh (mentioned 1/30 respectively), this is reflective of the low participation rate from these areas.

Table 3.3 Q8 Response Overview

	Number	%
Strong Support	11	28%
Support	8	21%
Neutral	7	18%
Minor Concerns	6	15%
Significant concerns	6	15%
Don't know	1	3%
Total	39	100%

	Support	Concerned
Support split	49%	31%

Table 3.4 Q8 Recurring Themes

Subject	Mentions	Rank
Prefers inclusion of a roundabout as a design principle	16	1
Roundabouts are less safe than alternatives	5	2

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Subject	Mentions	Rank
No comment - neutral	5	3
No comment - support	3	4
Roundabouts may cause issues with heavy traffic	2	5
Requests further details of costs associated with each option	1	6
Questions assumption that road safety is better in preferred layout.	1	7
Prefers inclusion of a roundabout at the north side of the A40 and traffic lights to the south side.	1	8
Roundabouts detract from pedestrian environment	1	9
Roundabouts take up too much space.	1	10
Suggests cycle lanes to improve safety at roundabouts	1	11
Unnecessary	1	12
May increase road safety	1	13
Concerns in regard to carbon emissions	1	14
Worse traffic associated environmental impact in High Cogges	1	15
Believes OCC own the necessary land for the delivery of a roundabout	1	16
Prejudices active travel	1	17
Roundabouts are more sustainable	1	18
Housing development will lead to gridlock at roundabouts	1	19
Concern South Leigh will become a "rat run"	1	20
No comment - against	1	21

9. Do you think our proposal to install west-facing slip roads at the A40/B4022 Shores Green Junction will help to reduce congestion and improve air quality in central Witney?

Summary of Responses

- The majority of respondees (23/39) agree that the proposals will help reduce congestion and improve air quality in central Witney.
- Of those who left comments, the main concern was that such improvements may be temporary as new housing development would bring new road users to the area (mentioned in 3/24 comments).

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Table 3.5 Q9 Response Overview

	Number	%
Yes	23	59%
No	4	10%
Partially	5	13%
Not Sure	7	18%
Total	39	100%

Table 3.6 Q9 Recurring Themes

Subject	Mentions	Rank
Route avoids Bridge Street / Centre of town	14	1
No comment - Yes	9	2
New housing will cancel out improvements by increasing number of vehicles on the road	3	3
No comment - Not Sure	3	4
Not enough information has been given to answer this question	2	5
Less traffic queues	2	6
Will have no affect	2	7
No comment - Partially	2	8
Should be supplemented by speed limit changes and/or other control measures	1	9
Require second bridge	1	10
Unclear	1	11
Will cause issues elsewhere	1	12
Consideration should be given to electric vehicles	1	13
May lead to traffic if slip roads become subject to traffic congestion	1	14
Should be supplemented by improvements to public and active transport	1	15
No comment - No	1	16

10. Our proposal includes plans to introduce new footways and cycle paths. Do you think this will help more people to choose walking and cycling for local journeys in this area?

Summary of Responses

- There were mixed responses with a high number of neutral responses (17/39).
- Of those who agreed with the statement and commented, some felt it would be safer than the current arrangement (mentioned in 3/25 comments) and may make cycling in Witney itself more attractive (mentioned in 2/25 comments).

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- Some commenters felt like the proposal would need to be supplemented by other schemes to have meaningful impact (mentioned in 2/25 comments) and that the specific area of the proposal would only attract a limited number of walkers and cyclists (mentioned in 4/25 comments).

Table 3.7 Q10 Response Overview

	Number	%
Yes	15	38%
No	7	18%
Partially	14	36%
Not Sure	3	8%
Total	39	100%

Table 3.8 Q10 Recurring Themes

Subject	Mentions	Rank
No comment - Yes	10	1
No improvement to existing levels of active travel	4	2
No need to walk/cycle in this location	4	3
Safer environment	3	4
May improve safety on main roads within Witney	2	5
Only for recreational walkers and cyclists	2	6
Needs to be supplemented by other cycling infrastructure	2	7
No comment - Partially	2	8
Depends on wait times and quality of crossings.	2	9
Food shopping journeys are not suitable for walking/cycling	2	10
Requires improvements elsewhere	2	11
No comment - No	2	13
Need to consider a cyclists as a priority	1	12
More work needs to be done to make cycling in Witney family friendly	1	14
Improvements could make cycling more family friendly	1	15
Insufficient information has been given to answer the question	1	16
Benefits will be more for those commuting to Eynsham and Oxford rather than local trips	1	17
People will still prefer to use their car due to convenience	1	18
Will link up existing bicycle routes	1	19
May encourage cyclists from South Leigh to Witney	1	20
Investment should focus on town centre improvements to active travel	1	21

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11. Overall, what is your view on our proposal to install west-facing slip roads at the A40/B4022 Shores Green Junction?

Summary of Responses

- Overall, there is strong majority support for the proposal with 27/39 responses voicing either strong support or support.
- The most popular positive comments were those stating that improvements are overdue already (mentioned in 9/30 comments) and stating support for the principle of reducing traffic in the town centre (mentioned in 5/30 comments).
- Of those who commented, 4/30 requested that further information is given to provide an opinion.
- For those who did not support the proposals, the most common concerns were:
 - Proposals will be too expensive (mentioned in 2/30 comments)
 - Traffic lights at junctions will increase levels of traffic (mentioned in 2/30 comments)
 - The proposals may lead to increased car use by making road travel more efficient (mentioned in 2/30 comments)

Table 3.9 Q11 Response Overview

	Number	%
Strong Support	22	56%
Support	5	13%
Neutral	3	8%
Minor Concerns	2	5%
Significant concerns	5	13%
Don't know	2	5%
Total	39	100%

	Support	Concerned
Support Split	69%	18%

Table 3.10 Q11 Recurring Themes

Subject	Mentions	Rank
No comment - Support	10	1
Delivery of improvements to Shores Green Junction overdue.	9	2
Supports principal removal of traffic from town centre	5	3
Insufficient information has been given to answer the question	4	4
Proposals are expensive	2	5
Believe traffic light junctions will lead to traffic	2	6
May encourage car use and discourage active travel	2	7
Prefer an alternative	1	8
Avoids users using accommodation bridge as they do as present which is potentially dangerous	1	9
Should be the last improvement required for A40 access at Witney	1	10

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Require further town centre improvements	1	11
Proposals are unsustainable	1	12
Will cause issues elsewhere on the road network	1	13
Concern for environmental impact on residents of High Cogges	1	14
Prefers inclusion of a roundabout	1	15
No comment - Neutral	1	16
Proposals will have no significant beneficial impact	1	17
Concern South Leigh will become a "rat run"	1	18

4. Summary of design changes

- 4.1. No changes to the scheme have been proposed in response to the feedback received during early stakeholder engagement and the recent public engagement.