

Service and community impact assessment (SCIA)

Ducklington Lane/Station Lane, Witney junction improvements

September 2013

Environment & Economy

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to assess the potential impact of proposals to introduce a capacity improvement scheme at Ducklington Lane, Witney with particular reference to groups of people who share protected characteristics (as defined in the Equalities Act 2010).

This SCIA focuses on the proposal to proceed with changes to the existing junctions with Station Lane/Thorney Leys, Beechgate, the slip roads with A40 eastbound and the northern approaches to Ducklington Roundabout. This assessment will be kept under review as this scheme is developed through to implementation, and updated as necessary to ensure emerging risks are identified and appropriate mitigating action is taken.

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) imposes a duty on the Oxfordshire County Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- The need to eliminate any conduct which is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act;
- The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share any of the protected characteristics listed in section 149(7); and
- The need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,

- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs of other people, and encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- Steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled include steps to take account of a person's disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- Age (people of different age groups)
- Disability (e.g. physical or sensory impairments, long-term illnesses and conditions, hidden impairments such as a heart condition, frailty, learning disabilities or mental health problems)
- Gender (men/women) and Gender Reassignment
- Ethnicity (including Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic groups, Gypsies & Travellers)
- Religion/belief (different faiths, including people with no religion or belief)
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage/civil partnerships
- Pregnancy & Maternity

Summary

Currently the Ducklington Lane corridor experiences congestion, which not only affects the corridor but has wider traffic impacts. In particular, long queues of traffic on Ducklington Lane (south) block vehicles trying to leave the A40 off-slip, and can also block vehicles using the A415 / Ducklington Lane roundabout wanting to travel onto Ducklington Lane and the A40.

Current provision for pedestrians and cyclists at the Ducklington Lane / Station Lane / Thorney Leys junction, and along the Ducklington Lane corridor, is limited. Providing better and safer crossing facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists will improve access to local jobs and facilities, and improve links with Ducklington village and the country park.

An initial scheme design for the Ducklington Lane corridor went out to public consultation from 8 July to 9 August 2013. This included consultation on a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for the closure of Beechgate's southern access. Other elements of the scheme design involved:

- Having three lanes on the approach to the junction on all arms
- Having two exit lanes, merging down to one lane on all arms except Thorney Leys which would have one exit lane
- Two northbound lanes on Ducklington Lane between the roundabout to the south of the A40 and the Station Lane junction
- Improved pedestrian facilities across Station Lane and cycle improvements along Ducklington corridor

The proposal is to improve the Ducklington Lane corridor by increasing highway capacity at the Ducklington Lane / Station Lane / Thorney Leys junction and along Ducklington Lane (south). Better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at the junction will also be incorporated. This will improve the flow of traffic, reducing congestion and delay, and provide a safer environment for all road users.

Following comments received from the consultation, including TRO, the following changes were made to the scheme design:

- The Ducklington Lane northbound carriageway (which runs parallel to Colwell Drive) is to remain a single lane highway, with a shortened merge lane located just to the north of the junction/adjacent to the Thames Water pumping station. The existing footway and hedge separating Colwell Drive properties from Ducklington Lane will be unaffected.
- The southern Beechgate vehicle access is to remain open with modifications made so that vehicles can only exit here and travel in the direction of Ducklington Lane south/the A40 on-slip. This is considered necessary in order to prevent an unsafe manoeuvre i.e. vehicles turning right out of the southern access and crossing four lanes of two-way traffic.

Other key features of the revised design include:

- Three lanes on all the approaches to the Ducklington Lane / Station Lane / Thorney Leys junction
- Right-turn manoeuvres at the bottom of the A40 off-slip and at the junction will be unopposed
- Two northbound lanes on Ducklington Lane (south) between the roundabout to the south of the A40 and the junction with Station Lane / Thorney Leys
- Signal control at the A40 off-slip / Ducklington Lane junction
- Improved pedestrian/cycle crossing facilities on Ducklington Lane (north) and Station Lane
- Pedestrian/cycle lanes along the Ducklington Lane corridor, and along Thorney Leys (subject to further consultation)
- Measures to improve the northern Beechgate access include yellow box hatching

Initial design work did include the assessment of a roundabout instead of a signal controlled junction, however technical work indicated that an improved traffic signal controlled junction is the most appropriate solution. A roundabout design would not be able to accommodate the predicted future northbound traffic flows without requiring significant land beyond the highway boundary.

Impact on customers

The proposals will help to achieve the county council's overall transport strategy for the town by reducing congestion and journey time delay, enhancing the pedestrian and cycle environment, and supporting the local economy and planned growth.

Motorised users

The scheme will provide considerable benefits for motorised users in terms of reduced congestion and improved journey reliability through the junction and carriageway widening and realignment. It will also discourage the use of Beechgate as a “rat-run” with the introduction of signals at the bottom of the A40 off-slip and environmental works which will bring benefits to local residents.

Non Motorised Users (NMU)

The proposals will include a number of improvements to the current arrangements for pedestrians and cyclists in the area:

- New staggered pedestrian crossing island on Ducklington Lane north of Station Lane (This is a controlled crossing – pedestrian stage called on demand at traffic signals location – this reflects desire lines at the junction)
- New staggered toucan crossing at Station Lane. (This is a controlled crossing – pedestrian/cyclist stage called on demand at traffic signals location – this reflects desire lines at the junction)
- New 3m segregated cycle link along Duckington Lane (Station Lane to Beechgate)
- New traffic island to assist cyclists and pedestrians crossing eastbound A40 slip road
- New footway to link with bus stop between Ducklington Roundabout and A40 slip roads
- Formalising of uncontrolled crossing of A40 slip roads at Ducklington Roundabout.

These changes will provide an improved facility for pedestrians and cyclists compared to the current arrangement although there are still some deficiencies in provision (the lack of a footway/cycleway along the western verge of Ducklington Lane, albeit that the proposals do partially extend footway provision along this section) and the proposals do include a pedestrian crossing refuge along Thorney Leys to encourage pedestrians to cross to re-aligned shared footway/cycleway on northern verge.

The new footways to the existing bus stop at the lower section of Ducklington Lane and pedestrian refuge are a considerable improvement on the existing minimal provision. However the operation of this refuge will need to be kept under observation when the scheme is installed in order to determine that it can be used safely and efficiently by all users, particularly older pedestrians and parents with children.

Age

The proposals will provide full pedestrian crossings at a number of junction arms where there are currently only informal crossings (albeit that some of these are assisted by traffic signals). This should enable slower pedestrians to have more confidence in crossing these roads than at present.

<i>Risks</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Potential for conflict between pedestrians	Keep under observation; if this becomes a

and cyclists on areas of shared use footway/cycleways	problem then either consider additional signing in affected areas or alterations to layout to remove conflict
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Disability

The proposals will provide generally wider footways along the length of Ducklington Lane as well as improved crossings which should aid people with both mobility and sensory impairments

Pregnancy and maternity

The improved footways and crossings will provide improved conditions for parents with prams/buggies, although there is some potential for conflict with cyclists on shared use sections.

Ethnicity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, gender and gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, deprivation

The proposals will not have a differential impact on service users arising from any of these characteristics.