

## PLANNING & REGULATION COMMITTEE

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Monday, 15 July 2024 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 4.00 pm

**Present:**

**Voting Members:**

Councillor Ian Snowdon – in the Chair  
Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor Robin Bennett  
Councillor Imade Edosomwan  
Councillor Ted Fenton  
Councillor Bob Johnston  
Councillor Judy Roberts  
Councillor David Rouane  
Councillor Geoff Saul  
Councillor Les Sibley

**By Invitation:**

**Officers:**

Whole of meeting David Periam (Development Management Team Leader), Nicholas Perrins (Head of Strategic Planning), Karen Jordan (Solicitor), David Mytton (Solicitor), Haidrun Breith (Landscape Specialist), Beccy Micklem (OCC Team Leader Landscape and Nature Recovery), Victoria Sykes (OCC Climate Consultant), Richard Oram (OCC Archaeology), Will Madgwick (OCC Highways) and Shilpa Manek (Democratic Services)

*The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda.*

### **8/24 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE 2024-25 COUNCIL YEAR**

(Agenda No. 1)

The Democratic Services Officer invited the Committee to elect the Chair for the 2023/24 Council Year.

As a result, two nominations for Chair, were received. A nomination for Councillor Snowdon, proposed by Councillor Gawrysiak and seconded by Councillor Fenton. And a second nomination for Councillor Saul which was proposed by Councillor Elphinstone and seconded by Councillor Edosomwan.

A vote was taken, and it was AGREED that Councillor Ian Snowdon be elected as the Chair for the 2024/25 Council Year.

**RESOLVED: that Councillor Snowdon was elected Chair for the Council Year 2024/25.**

**9/24 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR FOR THE 2024-25 COUNCIL YEAR**  
(Agenda No. 2)

The elected Chair, Councillor Ian Snowdon, invited the Committee to elect the Deputy Chair for the 2024/25 Council Year. As a result of two nominations were received. Councillor Johnston proposed Councillor Gawrysiak and this was seconded by Councillor Bennett. A second nomination was proposed by Councillor Elphinstone and seconded by Councillor Edosomwan for Councillor Saul. After a named vote was taken, it was AGREED that Councillor Gawrysiak be elected as the Deputy Chair for the 2024/25 Council Year.

**Resolved: that Councillor Gawrysiak be elected as the Deputy Chair for the 2024/25 Council Year.**

**10/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS**  
(Agenda No. 3)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bloomfield and Fadlalla. Councillor Elphinstone was substituting at the meeting.

Councillor Sibley left the meeting after the Chair and Vice Chair were elected.

**11/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE BELOW**  
(Agenda No. 4)

Councillor Johnston declared an interest as the application fell partly within his county division. He confirmed that he had not taken part in any discussions and was attending the meeting with an open mind.

Councillor Roberts declared an interest as the application was within her division. She had not expressed any views and was attending the meeting with an open mind.

Councillor Rouane declared that he was a Director of OxLEP and had not been involved in discussions, but it could be seen as a conflict so decided to withdraw from the meeting.

Councillor Rouane left the meeting.

**12/24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**  
(Agenda No. 5)

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to the amendment on the first page and removal of the text in the brackets.

**13/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda No. 6)

There had been no petitions, but the following speakers had registered to address the Committee after the application was introduced:

Patricia Murphy  
Brian Durham  
Chris Sugden  
Tim O'Hara  
Riki Therivel  
Tim King  
Peter Canavan  
Simon Collings  
Liz Sawyer  
Annie Blows  
Andrew Down  
Robin Neatherway  
Anthony O'Rourke  
Bethia Thomas  
Anna Railton  
Jonathan Madden  
Alistair Butchers  
John Mastroddi  
David Radford  
Martin Dowie  
Pete Sudbury  
Sarah Ainsworth  
Susanna Pressel  
Claire Wilson  
Matthew Frohn  
Nigel Chapman  
Adrian Porter  
Jocelyn Wogan-Browne  
Julia Hammett  
Debbie Hallett

**14/24 NORTH OF THE A420 BOTLEY ROAD TO SOUTH OF THE A423 RING ROAD, RUNNING PREDOMINANTLY BETWEEN THE A34 TO THE WEST & THE OXFORD TO LONDON RAILWAY LINE TO THE EAST, INCLUDING LAND BETWEEN THE A4144 ABINGDON ROAD TO THE TO THE WEST & THE RIVER THAMES**

(Agenda No. 7)

The Planning Development Manager introduced the application to the Committee explaining that it had been submitted by the Environment Agency. This was the second application submitted. The first application was submitted in April 2018 and withdrawn in March 2020. Two consultations have taken place and all comments submitted during both consultations had been considered by Officers. The Senior Planning Officer presented the presentation and gave detail to the application. The

Team Leader Landscape and Nature Recovery gave clarification on some of the landscape points.

The application is for a flood alleviation scheme to reduce flood risk in Oxford through construction of a new two stage channel from the confluence of the Botley and Seacourt Streams, extending south easterly to north Kennington; Floodwalls to the north of Botley Road, at Seacourt Park and Ride and adjacent to Bullstake Close allotments; Floodgates at Helen Road, Henry Road and Seacourt Park and Ride Flood defences at New Hinksey between Abingdon Road in the west and the River Thames in the east, Ferry Hinksey Road and north of South Hinksey; Control structures at Bullstake Stream, Eastwyke Ditch, Hinksey Pond, Redbridge Stream and Cold Harbour; Bridges and culverts to cross highways and footpaths maintaining access routes; Spillways, embankments, low flow control structure, modifications to Seacourt Stream, ford crossings, channel clearance, ditch widening and deepening, removal of weir and installation of telemetry cabinets; repairs to existing walls along Osney Stream and in Hinksey Park. The creation of new and improved habitat for flora, fauna and fisheries, and change of use of land to provide exchange for existing open space. Works will include extraction of some sand and gravel for reuse on the site and exportation from the site.

The Senior Planning Officer, Matthew Case, updated the Committee on the addenda to the reports since the report had been published. Members were informed that three further representations, in objection, had been received, including a response from the Oxford Flood and Environment Group (OFEG). The issues raised in the objections were summarised in the first addendum along with the Officer responses.

The recommendation to the Committee was as follows:

**It is RECOMMENDED that planning permission for application no. MW.0027/22 be granted subject to conditions to be determined by the Head of Strategic Planning to include the matters set out in Annex 1 (and any amendments to those conditions as deemed necessary), signing of a Section 106 Agreement to secure the 30 years Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan for offsite BNG and a monitoring fee for both the onsite and offsite Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (and any amendments as deemed necessary) and the application first being referred to the Secretary of State as it would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.**

Members asked for clarification on a couple of points.

The Committee were addressed by the following registered public speakers:

- Patricia Murphy representing the Oxford Flood Environmental Group was speaking against the application. The Committee was due to make a key decision but she felt that the report was flawed. Some vital information from the recent Compulsory Purchase Order public inquiry had not been considered, making the application legally unsafe and incomplete. The Group urged the Council to reconsider the application due to a significant oversight and improper application of the planning balance between public benefit and environmental harm. The distinction made between the compulsory purchase

order determination and planning considerations was invalid. The test should be whether the issues raised were material to the planning decision, not if they were part of separate processes. Ignoring the key concerns exposed the Council to potential legal challenges. Specific failures included adequately considering alternatives and evidence to the five-kilometre channel through the west Oxford Green Belt. This proposal was shown to be unnecessarily destructive, costly and of minimal benefit and non-compliant with mitigation hierarchy. Para 186(a) of the NPPF mandates avoiding significant harm to biodiversity first then mitigating and compensating as the last resort. No attempt to avoid harm had been demonstrated, violating the requirement to Para 186(c), development that results in the loss of deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused unless there were wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy. There were alternatives that do not lead to the loss of Hinksey Meadow and the compensation strategy was insufficient. An independent report highlighted the EA's failures to adequately model less damaging, no channel alternatives. The minimal difference between the proposed scheme and the no channel option wasn't properly investigated, revealing that not enough effort was made to explore viable alternatives. The failure to recognise the MG4A Hinksey Meadow far too late in the process was a critical oversight. With only four-square miles remaining in the UK, the EA did not address the mitigation hierarchy for irreplaceable habitat. This undermines the Council's ability to accurately assess compliance. The report also ignores evidence from an independent hydrogeology expert of potential catastrophic current water changes to the meadow, although the EA claimed to have data since 2018, this had not been included in the calculation nor provided to the inquiry, leaving the Council without crucial information. There was no information on groundwater flooding risks to evidence. The failures to incorporate material considerations and to comply with the NPPF renders this application legally unsound. The Group urge the Council to reject or defer the decision until all the evidence from the public inquiry had been thoroughly considered.

- Brian Durham, floodplain resident and retired meteorologist. Brian Durham worked as an archaeology specialist for the City Council. Members had been sent a traffic light map presenting solutions to issues raised in the Officers report. One detail referred to a new railway divider that Network Rail commented would be required. But a local pumping scheme had been offered that completed the scheme without railway engineering. The two details jointly make the flood scheme autonomous that the committee could safely approve subject to the draft conditions. The Defra Secretary of State had asked for the copies of the redraft planning conditions.
- Dr Chris Sugden, resident of North Hinksey Village, Chair of Ferry Hinksey Trust and convener of the Hinksey Environmental Group. Mr Sugden asked if there was a conflict of interest as OCC were a partner of the scheme and whether the concerns raised would be considered. Mr Sugden requested that the application be deferred until evidence from the public inquiry had been considered. The concerns were that the NPPF was followed with respect, otherwise legal advice would be sought on a potential judicial review. No real consideration had been given to the harm to biodiversity and irreplaceable habitats, neither had been considered correctly. The 4<sup>th</sup> Oxford Scout Group would no longer be able to access the street near the Fairly Easy Trust field,

which was an invaluable resource for scouting activity. The plans could be altered so access was maintained.

- Tim O'Hara retired chartered surveyor with over 30 years of experience in public sector in Oxfordshire. The Planning Officer had identified aspects of the application that conflicted with the plans, policies and guidelines but the belief was that these were outweighed by the flood protection benefits of the application. The conflicts of the application had been understated and the flood protection benefits had been taken at face value and were therefore overvalued. Mr O'Hara gave some examples and asked what the EA considered as severe floods. The Planning Officer repeated the applicants' claims that there would be flood protection benefits for transport links and utilities, yet the total cost analysis carried out by the EA suggested that this was too small to even consider.
- Riki Therivel, an environmental consultant specialising in impact assessment. The support was there for most of the flood scheme but opposed to the channel because of its traffic impact, which was partly mentioned in the environmental statement and the officers' report. The application suggests that the EA would like to reduce the traffic speed on the A34 near South Hinksey to 40 mph from 70 mph, and four times faster than the speed out which the HGV's would be exiting the A34, causing potential accidents and traffic jams. The EA had suggested that the works would take three years, but this could very easily increase. This would affect approximately 36 million vehicle journeys, which had been massively underplayed. It had been suggested that the issues could be resolved by a construction traffic management plan but this does not exist yet, however, the only resolution so far would be to further reduce the speed limit on the A34 to 20-30mph. If the application was approved, it would be with no real evidence of how the traffic issues could be solved.
- Dr Tim King, an independent ecologist, associated with Oxford University, ex member of the governments committee on air pollution and health, and a plant ecologist. Dr King urged the councillors to reject the application, knowing that there's an alternative in the background which could be implemented with relatively short notice. The scheme seemed a worthwhile idea, when originally suggested 17 years ago. After all, it would have improved flow at the points where it was currently impeded. Evidence in the last 7 years, especially from computer modelling has showed that it makes relatively little difference to the channel, which has formed a major part of the publicity of the scheme between Botley and Redbridge and is unnecessary. The meadows had been a worthwhile flood plain for about 1000 years and if someone decided that they wanted to build a channel across the equivalent, it would be rejected. The EA engineers were not equipped to balance the problems with their scheme against all sorts of other activities, such as the Green Belt, landscape, biodiversity, local opinion etc. it was up to this committee to balance the whole thing and reject this premature application, in the hope that a better alternative can be implemented.
- Peter Canavan, planning consultant and speaking on behalf of the Oxford Preservation Trust. The Trust had not taken lightly the prospect of objecting to this scheme. It accepted the need to address the effects of flooding in Oxford. It supported the principle of flood alleviation, however the application was an incomplete picture and without all the evidence, the full extent of the harms of

the scheme being presented, a proper, balanced, planning judgement could not be reached. After having constant contact with the EA and the County Council over almost 10 years, the Trust acknowledges that some of its concerns have been considered, but there remains a very real risk to Hinksey Meadow. The Trust's concerns were brought into sharp focus through the CPO hearings. Whilst the CPO process was separate to the planning decision, the evidence presented in that process was material to the deliberations. The scheme was contrary to the City Council's environmental policies and to the NPPF, paragraphs 180 and 186. The harms created by the scheme were not properly understood and therefore could not be accepted to be outweighed by public benefits. It was therefore impossible to demonstrate very special circumstances necessary to allow development in the Green Belt, also contrary to the NPPF, paragraph 153. The issues such as direct loss of grassland and indirect loss of grassland, the EA had failed to fully assess the indirect effects from the scheme on the remaining grassland and without mitigation, these effects would also weigh significantly against the scheme.

- Jonathan Maddan was speaking on behalf of Hinksey and Osney Environmental Group against the application. He had worked as an architect for several years. He, with others had developed a versatile method of pumping large volumes of flood water away from Hinksey Meadows with the capacity of up to 44 cubic metres per second, 4 million tonnes per day. This conceptual design was presented at the CPO inquiry in January 2024. The main advantage was that water was pumped in the early stages of a flood, reducing peak flood levels. This system was powered from local electricity supply with a back-up generator and the engineering and technology was worldwide industry standard. Such a system would cost less and take less time.
- Martin Dowie was speaking as a councillor from Botley and North Hinksey Parish Council, against the application. The Parish Council had considered biodiversity, recreation and amenities, traffic and highways, climate change, pollution and health and cost efficiency. The three main points addressed included that the Parish Council had not changed its position, it had concerns about the independence of the application and the economic case for the scheme but was pleased to see that measures had been taken and the referral to the Secretary of State. The Parish Council recognised the need for the flood alleviation scheme and welcomed some of the aspects of the scheme. The Parish Council did not support the secondary channel and the damage it caused and it being the element of the scheme that resulted in harm which outweighed the benefits of the scheme. The Parish Council hoped that the scheme would be revised, eliminating the secondary channel and modifying the remaining elements as necessary.
- Sarah Ainsworth was speaking as a resident of North Hinksey, supporting a flood alleviation scheme but not the scheme in the application. Sarah had personal experience of flooding and professional experience of high-level planning in flood emergencies to ensure highly vulnerable people and their families were kept safe. Sarah was keen to maintain the access to Hinksey Meadows for residents but also to ensure that public funds were not wasted on the wrong scheme. There were nine major funders that had a duty to deliver public benefits. The secondary channel would damage the precious, beautiful, biodiverse water meadows, being the most expensive and environmentally

damaging part of the scheme. Due diligence should be given at all aspects of the scheme and delivered by a bespoke scheme.

- Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, a professor of medical studies, was speaking against the second stage channel. Jocelyn had been very badly flooded in 2007 but not in 2014 because of nuanced local measures in large pumps and drains keeping the ground and surface water away, outside her home. Flooding was upsetting, expensive and time consuming to repair. This was not the correct scheme; it was expensive and would take a long time and would not eliminate the problem.
- Debbie Hallett, Councillor at Vale of White Horse District Council was representing the residents of Botley and North Hinksey and South Hinksey Parish Councils. Councillor Hallett initially supported the scheme but had concerns about the impact of the construction on residents. The concerns had now broadened, deepened and increased. Councillor Hallett asked about what mitigation measures had been taken to reduce five years of pollution in an already polluted corridor. The Committee would be weighing up the harms against the benefits and making a decision. Councillor Hallett asked the following questions to the Committee:
  - How confident were the Committee about the proven benefits of the scheme?
  - How many properties were going to be protected and by what means?
  - How confident was the Committee that the scheme was deliverable taking previous large projects into account such as the railway and Botley Road?
  - What would be the impacts on local areas if the scheme was abandoned? Were there any mitigation steps planned? How big of a risk was tolerable?
  - 85% of the measures did not depend on the channel and suggested an incremental approach to the project. Why not implement the most damaging measures first and then evaluate the outcome?

A flood alleviation scheme was a good thing, but the costs were tremendous. She urged for careful balancing of the proven and likely benefits to the responsibilities to all residents regarding environmental preservation, maintaining existing infrastructure and fiscal prudence.

- Julia Hammett spoke as Chair of Oxfordshire Badger Group, in objection to the application. Julia commented that the scheme in its current form was an environmental disaster and would cause irreversible damage to biodiversity including protected species, badgers, nature reserves, meadows and priority habitats. The only compensation would be a 10% minimum net gain by off-site compensation, which many regard as greenwashing. The Council ecologist stated that the scheme should have been viewed against the NPPF in the report. This would cause three setts of badgers to be lost and many more compromised.
- Simon Collings was representing the Oxford Flood Alliance, a resident of Osney Island since 2000 and speaking in favour of the application. He had had direct experience of flooding and it was a horrible experience. Mr Collings had been working closely with the EA and had created the Oxford Flood Alliance. He had seen the scheme be developed, adapted, modified in light of all the challenges and comments from the public from consultations. The EA had set out, during the CPO inquiry, their reasons for rejecting the points raised by



speakers earlier rejecting the application. He urged the Committee to support the application.

- Nigel Chapman representing Oxford City Council and portfolio owner for Citizens Focus Services which included flooding and the responses and management of flooding. Oxford City Council were a partner of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme and strongly supported the implementation. The Council was the largest contributor of the scheme and working actively with the EA for the last five years. Oxford had a history of flooding and causing damage to homes and businesses. The floods were increasing and needed to be managed. The number of properties getting flooded would increase if the scheme was not implemented. A flood alleviation scheme was urgently required to protect not only current but future communities. The scheme would reduce floods in the city and would direct the water to the existing flood plain. It was estimated that the scheme would save £1.4m in its lifetime by reducing flood damage and impact on the area. The scheme would have environmental benefits, prevent the production of carbon emissions in the long-term, create a new wet land corridor to the west of Oxford, providing an opportunity for enhanced habitat connectivity. Oxford City Council believed that the scheme presented was the best scheme for Oxford, managing the floods in Oxford for the next 100 years.
- Liz Sawyer is a resident with two small children who used the Hinksey Meadow regularly with the family. Flooding had an enormous environmental cost in terms of repair, replacement and disruption. This was the last generation to enjoy a high carbon lifestyle without suffering its negative consequences. The EA knew that there was a responsibility to adapt now and had spent 10 years iterating the design before all, and only submitting a scheme that would work.
- Annie Blows, a resident with first hand experience of regular flooding with sewage caused by overflowing of the Oxford sewer system due to flood water. The sewage overflowed and damaged her garden, utility room, children's playroom and other areas of their home causing potential health risks. There was never any assistance from Thames Water and the clean-up was insufficient leaving soiled tissues and faeces to disintegrate naturally. She stated that no home in 2024 should have to suffer this.
- Andrew Down, Officer at Vale of White Horse District Council, Deputy Chief Executive for Partnerships and working with the EA and other partners on the scheme since 2014. The District Council supported the application, which would reduce the flood risk for over 1000 homes and businesses in both Oxford city and the Vale. When roads closed due to the flooding, the impact on transport and the local economy was severe. Whilst he supported the application, a number of requests had been made. The Planning Officer was satisfied that all had been or would be addressed. The EA had listened to the views of residents and had proposed the scheme as it was presented.
- Pete Sudbury was speaking in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment, and Future Generations and Chairman of the OFAS Sponsoring Group. He also sat on the regional and coastal committee. The programme had been excellently led and had been thorough and well managed.
- Robin Neatherway was speaking as a resident since 2000. The water had been getting higher each year, and along with it came sewage and soiled paper. This was not even cleaned by Thames Water. We had been reassured

by the discussions of the flood alleviation scheme and hoped that four years on, this would now be approved and would be able to move on. With the shortage of homes in Oxford, it was not great that there were areas of Oxfordshire that were so badly flooded.

- Anthony O'Rourke had been a resident since 2003. He said that the flooding was getting bad. Emails and alerts from the EA caused dread for the preparation to move furniture and belongings. The stress, mould, damp, and smell lasted years. The garden floods annually and gets worse each year. A signed letter was sent to the Leader of the Council to approve the application.
- Bethia Thomas was speaking as Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council and partner of OFAS. The District Council was in support of the scheme. The floods affected many residents of Abingdon, disrupting life, work, and education. She advised that OFAS offered advanced flood alleviation and protection for almost 1000 homes and businesses in Botley, South Hinksey and the Vale, and it would prevent disruption and would create over 20 hectares of new wetland helping to reverse the national decline of wetland habitats. By working with the EA, there would be the opportunity to influence the design and construction of the scheme.
- Anna Railton, Deputy Leader for Oxford City Council but speaking as the Ward Member of Hinksey Park, South Oxford and speaking in favour for the scheme. South Oxford had suffered regular ground water flooding along with the heartache, disruption, stress and clean-up. Climate change would cause warmer and wetter conditions and therefore more misery due to flooding. OFAS would alleviate the flooding problems in South Oxford.
- John Mastroddi, resident since 1980 and researcher of the effects of flooding in the Redbridge area. Research had shown that planning projects in the area had made flooding events worse since 1947. The upgrading of the A34 from two of the four lanes had narrowed the flood channel considerably. All low-lying land around Redbridge had been filled with household waste. The old Abingdon Road had been raised, the A43 bridge had been constructed with no consideration to the flood channel and a concrete wall had been built across the Hinksey drain preventing flood water from flowing underneath the railway bridge. All projects now prevented the flow of flood water through the western corridor.
- David Radford, speaking as a resident of 30 years. Every five years, his garden would disappear in floods. This year, it has already flooded twice. Much damage was caused by the floods. The pumping mechanism discussed would not solve the problem.
- Susanna Pressel, County and City Councillor and representing the Botley Road area, today and for over 28 years. Councillor Pressel was speaking on behalf of hundreds of people in the Botley Road area. This was an excellent report, and the officers were recommending the application. The application had been supported by many. It was vital for the local and the UK economy. There were 58 conditions to reduce the negative impacts from the scheme.
- Claire Wilson, resident of South Hinksey, speaking in support of the scheme but had concerns about the traffic, construction, and time frames. Claire had been flooded six times, and on one occasion, she had to leave home in a foot of water for her wedding in France and abandoned the honeymoon to come back home and clean up the mess. Since then, the house had been made flood resistant but the maintenance of all the measures were getting costly and

timely. There was a resident scheme in place where everyone took turns every two hours to monitor the pumps, causing disruption to sleep. A permanent solution was needed for flooding problems. Many residents wanted the scheme.

- Matthew Frohn was speaking as a resident of South Hinksey. The OFAS is over a decade of capital analysis and design by multiple agencies, national bodies with the knowledge and expertise in flood and river management, as well as local bodies with responsibility for community and environmental sensitivities. The scheme would be noisy, disruptive, and annoying, but would be temporary and inconsequential when measured against the glowing benefits to the city, businesses, home, and communities.
- Councillor Gawrysiak asked what the views were on the environmental aspect of implementing the scheme as a resident. Matthew Frohn responded that he had been particularly impressed by a presentation given to South Hinksey residents about four years ago about how the scheme would generate the flow, provide a far better flow, and how the wetlands would develop. A lot of care had gone into the scheme.
- Adrian Porter, resident of South Hinksey, flooded very badly, which still causes trauma. Adrian worked very hard as a flood warden. Flooding caused anxiety and physical disruption on an annual basis. He was very much in support of the scheme and the environmental benefits.

Veronica James, applicant, Environment Agency, Planning Manager for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS). The scheme would reduce the risk of flooding for all properties at risk from the river flooding in Oxford. The need for the scheme had been explained clearly and convincingly by previous speakers. The local residents that had spoken, some of whom had suffered the trauma of flooding in the past. The floods were not new to Oxford and closed down the transport links, causing issues for homes and businesses. With climate change, floods were predicted to be more frequent and more severe. As an organisation, there was a responsibility for managing the risks from flooding from the main rivers, and to do this, projects, such as this are delivered. The scheme proposed in this planning application were the best solution to managing the flood risk, to reduce flood risk to Oxford, to reduce the flood risk to homes, businesses, to the main transport links and to local infrastructure. Alternatives had been considered during the options appraisal process approach. A process that had to be completed to get approval from the organisation and government in order to proceed. Only technically feasible options were considered. At each stage of the projects design, the proposal had been revisited to ensure the best options for this location. Evidence had been provided to support this with the planning application and the hydraulic modelling had been peer reviewed prior to submission. All local government guidance on climate change had been followed and the evidence had been reviewed by the statutory consultees for flooding during the formal consultation process with no objections raised. The environment had been at the forefront of the design. The principle aim under the Environment Act 1995 was to protect or enhance the environment, to make a contribution towards sustainable development and there was a duty under the same Act generally to promote the conservation and enhancement of the water courses and the land, fauna and flora associated with them. The EA would like to be proud of

the scheme and for it to be a success, not only for reducing flood risk but also for the environment. The scheme worked well with the flood plain to the west of Oxford. The water would be drawn away from the built-up areas by creating a new stream and lowering parts of the floodplain to make more space for the water, whilst also bringing environmental benefit to the area. The same amounts of water brought to the north of Botley Road would re-enter the Thames where it would rejoin in Kennington. This was very important as it ensured that flood risk would not increase downstream. The design was a passive one, with water entering the wetland as levels rose and in major floods, water would still use the existing flood plain. This flood plain was within the Green Belt; therefore the scheme was located within the Green Belt. A very thorough analysis had been set out by the case officer for this. It concluded that very special circumstances existed so the application could be approved. The considerations for Hinksey Meadow had been detailed and thorough and modifications made where possible. The tree planting proposals would increase the woodlands in the areas after completion. The scheme would be maintained, and public access carefully considered and made better. With respect to traffic, the EA had worked with National Highways and their advice had been taken on board and the scheme modified. Consultation had taken place with the local planning authority, parish councils, consultees and the scheme was a result of all the comments made.

The following questions were asked to the applicant and their technical officers and officers of the planning authority:

- Were the soil characteristics of the proposed grassland area the same as or similar to the soil taken? The applicants technical officer informed the Committee that the soils were very similar.
- How long was the Electric Road to be closed for? Officers advised that it was not due to close at all.
- Would the piling in North Hinksey near the school affect the school as they were informed that the school would not be affected. One of the conditions was about the noise and to limit it and that would include the school.
- The Network Rail agreement was discussed but this only related to the compulsory purchase order.
- There would be no substantial harm to the heritage assets. The scheme would work around the monuments. The impact would only be around the setting and not to the monuments.
- How much confidence was there that the channel would not increase the downflow stream? The EA team reported that water would move away from residential areas, at the same speed and the same distance, through the flood scheme.
- Why was the no channel model discounted and how had the project been sequenced? It was reported that there was no prioritisation from one end to the other. The no channel option had not been progressed as the course around Oxford was very flat and complex and with that option, there was no way of knowing where the water was going so it could not be monitored.
- A new meadow was to be established; how long would this take? It was a good position as a meadow was already present. The process to improve the

quality was going to be by using green hay spreading, it would take 5-10 years to achieve a high-quality meadow.

- Why was the biodiversity being carried out offsite? The EA Officers explained that the vision to lower the land and recreate high quality habitat on the land had been agreed by all of the conservation groups in Oxford. They all agreed that by doing it this way, it would be far better than it was now. Detail was given on the matrix and how it worked.
- What was the vision for the end of the scheme for the meadow, a pristine landscape or a meadow as it is now? The plan was for a semi-natural, low intensity management flood plain habitat, all managed with nature principles in mind.
- How many lorries would there be every day? There would be 111 lorries using different accesses per day.
- A lot of residents had talked about sewage in the homes, is the scheme going to prevent this after it is implemented? Thames Water was part of the partnership. The scheme would reduce sewer flood risk.
- Speakers had mentioned the benefits of the pumping system so why was it not used? The scheme used was a passive scheme with minimal risks of it going wrong. A mechanical system such as a pump could go wrong and stop working. The scheme has been kept as simple as possible.
- Was there an impact statement for the traffic around Botley Road? A construction management plan would be in place covering the distribution of lorries and HGV management.
- The scheme is said to take 3-5 years, will there be 111 lorries every day across the full term and would it be in the same direction or both ways? The 111 lorries would be spread across all different accesses and during peak construction, mainly through Parker Road with the majority going north and some south. No earth works would take place over the winter months because of the flood plain and floods.
- The recommendation read that there was a 30-year habitat management plan, what were the views to change this to 100 years? The 30 years had been stipulated and related to the biodiversity net gain plan and was mandatory. EA would manage the landscape. The OCC Planning Officer clarified that the application was not subject to the Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations as this application was not subject to the mandatory requirement for 30 years habitat management, but they were committing to do so anyway.
- What would the temporary re-routing of the Old Abingdon Road look like? This would be a temporary carriageway, a loop below Abingdon Road. This would be one-way and then the other and then reinstated to woodland after taken away.
- Had the new bridge been factored in when considering the impact of traffic in Botley? And will residents be adequately informed of processes? The earth works would take place in the summer months only and other works during the winter months too. The EA were aware of all other works as they were directly linked with infrastructure companies. A Community Liaison Officer would be the first point of contact for residents. Engagement with residents was part of the construction management plan and it was conditioned. Engagement would be through various methods.
- Was 30 years adequate for the habitat management plan? It was explained that 30 years was adequate to implement? the management plan, the

monitoring would feed back into the plan. It was not just about the timeframe; the principle was more important.

- Could the condition during peak times in the construction traffic plan be altered and widened, two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon seemed too less and did not encompass the actual traffic times. The traffic management plan was a live document and was regularly monitored and could be changed, in discussion and within reason and if required.
- If the application was to be approved, the recommendation read subject to being referred to the SoS, will that happen? How long would that delay the work? And what weight would the Committee’s decision carry? The advice of the officers was to refer to SoS to see if they wanted to call it in, if it was approved. They may not want to call it in. a decision would possibly come withing 4-6 weeks.
- Was it possible to add a condition that the Planning and Regulation Committee see the landscaping plan including trees and habitats? It was perfectly normal for the Planning and Regulation Committee to make this request, stating which conditions they wished to be referred back to them for approval when applications were made to discharge them.
- The word ‘same’ before standards was missing in condition 30 in Annex 1. Could this be added? This would be amended.

**ACTION: Amend condition as above**

Councillor Gawrysiak proposed to APPROVE the Officers’ recommendation in the addenda with the conditions stated and the addition for the Planning and Regulation Committee to see the landscaping scheme, the tree planting details and the construction traffic management plan, all at a future meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Saul.

A named vote was carried out. Councillors Bennett, Edosomwan, Elphinstone, Fenton, Gawrysiak, Johnston, Saul and Snowden voted for the motion. Councillor Roberts abstained from voting.

**RESOLVED:** that the planning application for the Oxfordshire Flood Alleviation Scheme be **APPROVED** with the additional three requests from the Planning and Regulation Committee.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....