

Division(s): Witney South & Central, Witney West & Bampton

CABINET– 15 OCTOBER 2013

Witney Transport Strategy Phase 1 – Ducklington Lane Corridor Improvements

Report by Deputy Director (Strategy & Infrastructure Planning)

Introduction

1. At its meeting on the 19th March 2013 the Cabinet endorsed a programme of investment in infrastructure in support of the proposals in the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan. The programme is comprised of four phases:
 - Phase 1 – Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction improvements
 - Phase 2 – A40 Downs Road junction
 - Phase 3 - A40 Shores Green slip roads
 - Phase 4 - Bridge Street
2. This report sets out more detailed proposals for Ducklington Lane, the first phase of the Witney Transport Strategy, and in particular it:
 - Provides an update on the development of the scheme
 - Provides a summary of the feedback received from the public consultation and following this, the proposed changes to the scheme
 - Seeks approval to complete the detailed design and proceed to delivery of the scheme (Phase 1 of the Witney Transport Strategy)

Background

3. Over the next 10 to 15 years, Witney will see housing and employment growth, which will lead to increased travel demands. The draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan includes proposals for 1,900 new homes in Witney, with Strategic Development Areas identified at West and East Witney. This growth requires investment in infrastructure.
4. 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. Please refer to Annex 1 for the map of the scheme location.
5. 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.

Initial Scheme Design and Consultation

6. An initial scheme design (Annex 2) 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
7. The consultation included a public exhibition held over two days (Friday 12 and Saturday 13 July) at the Methodist Church, High Street, Witney. Approximately 150 people attended the exhibition. Those attending were invited to complete a comments form, which was also available online (along with plans of the proposals).
8. For the TRO consultation, 65 letters, along with a scheme plan, were sent to Beechgate residents, and other residents and businesses within close proximity of Ducklington Lane corridor and the proposal was advertised in The Oxford Times and on site. The scheme was also presented at the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee on 7 May 2013, prior to the exhibition. A copy of the TRO can be found in Annex 3.
9. A total of 50 separate comment forms were received at the exhibition and via the online consultation. The table below shows how these comments fit into three broad categories: 'support', 'do not support' and 'no clear view'. It should be noted that we did not explicitly ask members of the public whether they supported the scheme proposals or not.

Responses	No. of responses
Support proposals	20
Do not support proposal	16
No clear view	14
Total	50

10. The TRO consultation received four objections, including one letter with a petition with 27 signatories and one response in support from Thames Valley Police. A copy of all the comments, the TRO objections (and signed petition) along with officer comments, are in Annex 4.

11. In summary, the key issues raised were:

- Residents of Colwell Drive whose properties back onto Ducklington Lane objected to widening the road from one to two lanes at this point, as this would mean the loss of some of the existing 'buffer' (a footway and hedge) between their properties and Ducklington Lane. Residents are very concerned that this will negatively impact on their quality of lives because of increased noise, vibration, pollution and disruption from traffic being closer to their properties. Some residents also considered that this could have a negative impact on property prices.
- A significant number of residents objected to the Traffic Regulation Order consultation which was linked to the closure of the 'southern' access to the Beechgate residential area. Residents objected to this on the grounds of restricted access to properties including the ability of ambulances to access a care home, manoeuvring a particularly large vehicle into a resident's driveway, and general access by refuse collection vehicles. Some residents were also concerned that there would be increased delay/inconvenience getting out of the main (northern) junction because of the increased number of vehicles using this junction.
- Several objectors felt that a roundabout solution would be better, because they feel a signal junction will hold up traffic and therefore not deal with the congestion problem.
- Some objectors (and also some of those with 'no clear view') felt the original proposals did not go far enough to support cycle access, and to a lesser extent, walking access was raised. In particular, they would like formal crossings on all arms of the junction and cycle provision also along Thorney Leys.
- Proposals also included measures to stop vehicles turning right in to the Esso petrol filling station from Station Lane. The access is left-in only. Despite this surveys show drivers carry out this manoeuvre frequently. During the consultation we were contacted by Esso about allowing vehicles to exit their site to the left and right onto Station Lane. These discussions are still on-going.

Revised Scheme Design following Consultation

12. A scheme plan showing a revised design is in Annex 5.

13. Following comments received from the consultation, including TRO, the following changes have been 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.

In light of this, the advertised TRO is no longer required to implement the revised scheme.

However, before the end of the current calendar year, a new TRO proposing no right turns from the junction and turning into the junction, together with a no motor vehicle (except for access) restriction and traffic calming will be advertised with any objections reported to a Cabinet Member for Environment Decisions Meeting.

14. 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.

15. In relation to comments about a roundabout being more suitable, initial design work included assessment of a roundabout instead of a signal controlled junction. Technical work indicated that a roundabout would not be able to accommodate the predicted future northbound traffic flows without requiring significant land beyond the highway boundary.

Financial and Staff Implications

16. The estimated total cost of the Ducklington Lane corridor scheme is £2m and will use developer contributions already held by the County Council. A final cost will be obtained at the end of the detailed design stage. Officers will manage the costs of the scheme so that it is delivered within budget.
17. This scheme will be designed and implemented by Atkins through the County Council's existing highways contract.

Equality and Inclusion

18. The scheme proposals are not considered to have the potential to affect people differently according to their gender, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation.
19. Conversions of informal crossings to signalised pedestrian and cycle crossings will have a positive effect, particularly for people that are blind or partially sighted. Annex 6, the Equality and Inclusion Assessment, provides more detail on this.

Timetable for Implementation

20. The current timetable to deliver the proposals for the Ducklington Lane corridor are as follows:

Witney Transport Investment Programme: Phase 1 Ducklington Lane Corridor	
Activity	Delivery
Complete detailed design	November 2013
Start onsite	April/May 2014
Works complete	October/November 2014

RECOMMENDATION

21. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **note the responses received as part of the consultation;**
 - (b) **agree the proposed changes to the scheme reflected in the revised scheme drawing as well as approve the scheme for detailed design and construction; and**
 - (c) **delegate powers to the Director for Environment & Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, to make minor amendments to the scheme.**

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