

Report on West and East Hagbourne Parish Councils Joint Meeting on the SCOTS report with Oxfordshire County Council

Date: Thursday 5th March 2009 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Venue: Hagbourne Village Hall

Attendees: Jacqui Cox, David Clough (OCC)
Roger Emery, John Townsend, Derek Button, David Rickeard (EHPC)
Phil Taylor, Sue Totterdell, Marion Judd (WHPC)
Patrick Greene (SODC and OCC Councillor)

A set of 9 questions had previously been circulated to provide a framework for the discussion. These questions are repeated here, with answers and conclusions, to form this report.

Introduction. Jacqui Cox outlined some background to the SCOTS report and gave some key points arising from it, with particular reference to traffic flows and proposals for new roads.

Specific Questions and Answers.

The traffic flow through West Hagbourne's conservation area, especially in peak hours has grown year on year for the past six years. So far NOTHING has been done to reduce or discourage this. With Great Western Park approved and due to commence construction, and with further development planned for Didcot, we would like to ask the following specific questions:

1. Phil Taylor (Chair of West Hagbourne Parish Council) asked this question at the Town and Parish Forum in November 08 "Given the long/mid-term plan for the dramatic expansion of Didcot, HOW does the Council intend to influence the traffic flow which even now poses a threat to the surrounding villages most affected?" The answer was 'the SCOTS report' Can you specifically explain how its recommendations will ACTUALLY improve things for the Hagbournes?

Answer(DC-OCC): No. The SCOTS study work was not focused on controlling the traffic flow through the villages although predictions for link flows through the villages are shown (Table 10) in response to schemes aimed at improving the east/west flow (i.e. Wantage to Didcot).

2. How long does the County believe the road through West Hagbourne should act as an essential feeder road for Didcot, when it is evidently not capable of sustaining the current flow of traffic today?

Answer (JC-OCC): The county does not see the road through West Hagbourne as a strategic road even though it carries so much traffic at commuting times.

3. Please clarify. The labeling for columns (5) and (6) in Tables 5 to 11 is confusing. Does column (5) mean that all the highway schemes recommended in Section 4.6.1 are implemented except for the Featherbed Lane safety improvements, and column (6) that all the highway schemes recommended in Section 4.6.1 are implemented except for the Rowstock Bypass?

Answer (JC): In tables 5 to 11

- *'Do nothing' means no changes to the present road infrastructure.*
- *Column 6 headed '2026 all schemes but with Rowstock Bypass', means all schemes in Wantage, the link road between the A4130 and the A417 (so-called Harwell Bypass) and the link (co-called Southern Perimeter Road) up to Park Road are implemented, together with only the Rowstock Bypass, as in Figure 5.*
- *Column 7 headed '2026 all schemes but with F/bed Lane', means all schemes in Wantage, the link road between the A4130 and the A417 (so-called Harwell Bypass) and the link (co-called Southern Perimeter Road) up to Park Road are implemented, together with only the A417 link to Chilton and the Improvements to Featherbed Lane, as in Figure 4.*

4. For what reasons has it been decided to focus on E/W traffic movements? And what does the analysis say about future traffic issues in West Hagbourne?

Answer (JC-OCC): The E/W emphasis in the SCOTS report is aimed at linking the housing growth at Wantage, Grove and Didcot to employment development at Harwell and Milton Park. It was agreed that N/S movement along the Science Corridor up to Oxford remains to be addressed.

5. Does it make any real difference where the 2016-2026 houses are located? The report (3.3.37) says "The results of this testing did not provide any clear indication of where the housing would be best located in transport terms".

Answer: It was agreed that this statement only addressed questions of traffic movement in a limited way. It does not address questions of traffic movement during the housing development period, nor does it address the cost of installing the road infrastructure that is part of the housing development

6. What does the SATURN model predict for traffic in WH in 2009 to compare with our own current traffic figures?

Answer (JC-OCC): OCC agreed to extract model predictions for the traffic in WH in 2009 so that these can be compared with current measurements. OCC also agreed to distinguish between average values and the reality of commuting traffic flows being very lumpy.

7. Where exactly does their 'Harwell bypass' come out onto the A417. If they don't have a specific location in mind, how can they model whether traffic will feed to Rowstock or to Hagbourne Hill - which is important for the rest of their modeling of Rowstock flows.

Answer (All):

The road was modeled as joining the A417 just to the east of the bridge over the A34. With the Rowstock option, traffic was expected to feed west to the re-modelled Rowstock area and then south.

Since commissioning the report, OCC has had additional discussion with Halcrow to consider the upgrade of Hagbourne Hill to cope with the anticipated flows, and Highways have declared the road unsuitable for upgrading. A viability plan cutting a new route up through the centre of Hagbourne Hill was shown, though this did not take into account that it is in the AONB or that it would have archaeological implications as it goes through an area of tumuli.

. There has been inconsistency in the drawings in SCOTS because subsequent work has moved the line being considered: where it intersects with the A417 will impact on WH. A second proposal mentioned (with a new route for a road that links the Harwell site with the Kingswell Bridge) might best satisfy the traffic flow requirements if properly integrated with the other road infrastructure planned for Didcot.

OCC agreed to provide the traffic flows through Harwell, so WH could compare the peak hours that affect its Conservation area.

It was agreed that further detailed discussion was beyond the scope of the present meeting and that time and opportunity must be set aside for OCC, the study consultants (Halcrow) and 'local experts' from East and West Hagbournes to work together on this.

8. On the larger scale, emphasis has been placed on the development of a north-south science and high-tech corridor involving Oxford and the Oxford Science Park at the north end, passing down through Culham to Milton Park, Harwell and the Rutherford Laboratory. The report (2.2.3) states that "*there has also been a need to consider the potential knock-on impacts of any schemes to address travel movement east-west on the wider area, particularly to the north of the study area, towards Abingdon and Oxford..... The technical Note will detail any additional mitigation measures that may be required to the north of the study area as a consequence of the planned growth at Wantage/Grove and Didcot*". When will this be available and to what extent will it change the conclusions of the SCOTS report?

Answer (JC-OCC): See answer to question 4. Also OCC reported that a new traffic model was being developed for the south-central region that would address some of these wider questions. In addition, it should be more realistic

9. Report (Section 3.3.22.) shows an increase in traffic through the villages by both 2016 and 2026 as a result of housing and employment growth and says some of these are significant. Are these the figures shown in Table 10? i.e. East Hagbourne increase from 120 in 2006 to 320 in 2026:

- a. Comment is needed on New Road and Blewbury Road traffic levels since these are also part of East Hagbourne village and include parts of the conservation area.

Answer (JC-OCC): Figures for New Road and Blewbury Road are in the model and can be extracted.

b. Do these figures include increases in traffic due to displacement?

Answer (JC-OCC): Only to a limited extent. However, there is a new model called the 'Central Oxford Transport Model' that is being developed. This will be much more realistic with regards to effects like traffic displacement.

Question and answer session: The remaining time focused on some details of the so-called Harwell By-Pass and proposed link to Park Road. Some conclusions were:

- General support for the (Harwell) By-Pass, but it was agreed that it needs to be designed and positioned carefully in order to be of general benefit to both Harwell and West Hagbourne.
- The route must work for Didcot, to allow the passage of traffic in and out of the town without the need for it to further damage and impact on the surrounding villages.
- The position where the By-Pass joins the A4130 needs to minimise interference with the Milton interchange traffic, and the join/route to the A417 should aim to provide the maximum reduction in traffic through West Hagbourne.
- The possible link road to Park Road raised great concern. Park Road and Vauxhall Road are essentially residential roads with single road access to many individual houses and already planned to accept traffic from 100 new houses from the Great Western Development (and threatened with more). It could be disastrous for these roads. Further, it would be highly damaging if the link encouraged more rat-running through East Hagbourne as well as the knock-on effect on New Road and, for instance, further loading the Marsh Bridge roundabouts. It is important that the proposal for this link is reviewed and assessed realistically and in detail with respect to its local implications.

Conclusions and actions.

- The meeting was very helpful to show the level and significance of the SCOTS study work, particularly for traffic analysis to the south and west of Didcot. However, it was also clear that this work is on-going and would greatly benefit from direct involvement by a few local parish people. They can give the ground-truth of the current traffic and an idea of the way that local people are likely to be affected by the traffic consequences of the housing development.
 - The parishes of E and W Hagbourne are keen to provide an input to the traffic modeling and analysis in their general area and are offering to participate in this work.
 - The SCOTS report is aimed at providing part of the evidence base for planning the housing development around Didcot. Some parts of this, such as input to the

Preferred Options document, have a short time scale. Hence, this could be very urgent.

- Question 6. OCC agreed to send model predictions for the traffic in WH in 2009 so that they can compare these with current measurements. OCC also noted the need to distinguish between average values and the reality of local people dealing with commuting traffic flows.
 - OCC also agreed to provide the traffic flows through Harwell, so WH could compare the peak hours that affect its Conservation area.
- Question 9(a). It is also important to have the figures for the traffic flows in New Road and Blewbury road and for the analysis/conclusions to be aware that these need to be minimised.
- The proposal for a link road to Park Road must be reviewed and assessed realistically and in detail with respect to its local implications.

The meeting closed at 8:10 p.m. with thanks to Jacqui Cox and David Clough for agreeing to attend the meeting and to Patrick Greene for helping to arrange it.