
Planning Application ref: MW.0028/18

Please note that the Oxfordshire County Council original request is in black text, EA response is provided in blue. Information requests also made in emails dated 19/9/18 and 1/11/18 are also covered.

Noise and Nuisance
The Environmental Health Officer at Oxford City Council has commented that no explanation has been provided regarding why operational impacts have been scoped out. Details of how this matter has been considered should be provided.

As outlined in our Preliminary Environmental Information Report (2016) and pre-planning application submission (2017), we scoped out the operational impacts of noise and vibration from the Environmental Impact Assessment (i.e. those impacts that would be experienced when the scheme is up and running), as there is no mechanism for significant noise or vibration effects to be caused upon completion of the scheme. The flood alleviation scheme will not involve the construction of any facilities that will generate significant noise during the operational phase. Additionally, any traffic movements required during operation, maintenance and inspections associated with the scheme will be very occasional and involve very few vehicles.

Landscape
Oxfordshire County Council’s landscape consultant has advised that the proposed level of tree removal should not be accepted unless it can be demonstrated that tree loss cannot be reduced. Therefore, consideration should be given to whether amendments can be made to the proposals to reduce the extent of tree removals. If this is not possible, further information should be submitted to demonstrate why the extent of tree removals proposed is necessary.

The alternative design options considered to minimise impacts on trees and vegetation are described in Section 2.3 of the original ES.
We have revisited the arboricultural survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) to further reduce the tree losses within the temporary working area of the scheme. An updated Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement (Middlemarch October 2018) are provided as Annex G of the ES Addendum, which provides further justification for the extent of tree removal.

We have also received queries from local groups regarding the meaning of a ‘group’ of trees as referenced in the ES. The British Standard explains that a ‘group’ is used to identify trees that form a cohesive feature, such as a group that together provide shelter or a visible screen. We have undertaken further work to calculate what the felling of ‘groups of trees’ and the ‘partial removal of tree groups’ means in terms of the actual number of trees to be felled. We have undertaken a site survey and counted all of the trees that will be affected by the scheme. Trees that have a stem diameter greater than 75mm diameter at 1.5m above ground level have been surveyed by eye. It is estimated that approximately 2000 individual trees will need to be felled.

As explained in the ES addendum to mitigate for the tree loss we will be planting 4325 trees. This will include 4100 trees within areas of proposed mixed, deciduous woodland and 225 individual trees.

Approximately 15,000 smaller tree species, such as hawthorn, hazel and elder, will also be planted within the proposed woodland areas and on the woodland edges, along with many more native shrubs such as dogwood, goat willow, dog rose and wild privet. The tree-planting proposals therefore result in more woodland within the scheme area after completion, than there currently is at present. These woodland areas will be managed for wildlife and include glades that are sown with wildflowers to encourage butterflies and other insects, as well as birds and foraging bats.

The replacement woodland trees will be saplings and it will be many years before they have the same ecological value as those being felled, so throughout the design process, our contractors, engineers and ecologists have worked together to minimise tree loss wherever possible. We will also seek to further minimise tree loss when we are building the scheme. If it becomes clear that the contractor can work around trees that have been identified for felling without damaging them then they will be retained. An Environmental Clerk of Works will be on site and work alongside the contractor to make sure that these further opportunities are identified and taken wherever possible.

The following further information is requested with respect to landscape impacts:

- A further assessment of the impact of the proposals on elevated views from the Public Rights of Way network to the west of the A34.

This is dealt with in Chapter 7 ‘Landscape and Visual Amenity’ of the ES addendum. We have produced additional viewpoints/visualisations for the following:
- Raleigh Park protected view location (viewpoint 13) visualisation only is provided to support the viewpoint previously provided within the ES,
- Land south of Hinksey Heights Golf Club (viewpoint 17) visualisation only is provided to support the viewpoint previously provided within the ES,
- Hinksey Hill roundabout protected view location (viewpoint 22) visualisation only is provided to support the viewpoint previously provided within the ES,
- North Hinksey Lane (new viewpoint 27) new viewpoint and visualisation provided, and
- Hinksey Meadow and Seacourt Nature Park (new viewpoint 28) new viewpoint and visualisation provided.

- Justification of the proposed extent of tree removals, including details of design alternatives which could secure the retention of a greater proportion of tree cover and reasons why these design alternatives were not taken forward.

The alternative design options considered to minimise impacts on trees and vegetation are described in Section 2.3 of the original ES. Many of the affected trees are impacted as a direct result of the physical features of the scheme which has been minimised as far as possible to obtain a reasonable balance between flood risk management effectiveness and future ongoing maintenance requirements. We have also worked closely with a Contractor during the detailed design phase to ensure that the working areas around the scheme are as small as practicably possible to allow the scheme to be safely built. This has helped to reduce the number of trees directly affected by the implementation of the scheme.

Additionally, an updated Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement (Middlemarch October 2018) are provided as Annex G of the ES Addendum, which provides further justification for the extent of tree removal

- The landscape mitigation strategy may need to be reviewed should amendments be made to the proposed extent of tree and grassland removal.

The Landscape General Arrangement Plans and the Landscape and Habitat Creation Delivery and Management Plan have been updated to reflect the reduced extent of tree removal.

- Further consideration should be given to the choice of materials and the appearance of engineered elements including weirs, flood walls, flood gates and abutments to ensure that these remain as recessive as possible and do not appear overly prominent.

This is dealt with in section 7.1.7 of the ES addendum.

- Further consideration should be given to reducing construction effects on MG4 grassland habitat, including limiting construction space in this area to preserve as much of the grassland at possible, and protecting those retained areas of grassland with suitable, temporary, fencing to prevent ingress by construction traffic.
This particular issue was considered and assessed as part of the design of the scheme and consideration of alternatives. The final alignment was chosen to reduce the impact on the MG4a grassland as far as possible. This is covered within the Environmental Statement in some detail in Section 2.3.3.

Vale of White Horse District Council have requested further detail in the Landscape and Visual Assessment to help people understand the impact of the scheme, including the impact of tree removal and replanting on views of North Hinksey Village and the spires of Oxford.

See additional viewpoints listed above. These include 2 additional viewpoints agreed with Avril Williams, Landscape Officer at the Vale of White Horse District Council.

**View cones**

Further information about the impact on the City Council’s view cones is required in order to understand the impact on the setting of the city. Oxford City Council have recommended fully assessed CGI imaging, particularly from the western side where change will be evident and views are more sensitive.

The photomontages that have been produced are Computer Generated Images (CGI) and they have been produced following the Landscape Institute/IEMA Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/09 (Use of photography in landscape and visual assessment).

A view from St Mary’s Tower should be considered as this vantage point is higher than others selected and a critical vantage point for viewing the landscape setting of the city to the south and west.

Existing viewpoint 16 in the original ES is from Carfax Tower, Queen’s Street with photos looking west over towards the scheme. Although the foreground would be different from St Mary’s Tower the background would be the same. A further viewpoint to show this is therefore not necessary. This was confirmed in an email dated 10 September 2018 with Oxford City Council who originally made this request.

Raleigh Park and Hinksey Interchange have not been included in verified views. These view cones cover the central area of the scheme where the scheme would have the greatest impact, across the open meadows that provide the uninterrupted foreground to the city and its ‘dreaming spires’ and to parts of the city that offer potential for substantial change. Therefore, verified views are required to assess the impacts.

We can confirm these have been added as listed above.

**Green Infrastructure**

Further information and clarifications are requested to confirm whether the opportunities identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy have been adequately
incorporated into the application proposals and that full account has been taken of the likely practicalities of delivering these opportunities in the final scheme.

This information is provided within Section 2.3 of the ES addendum.

Specifically, the following clarifications are requested:
- The locations of the main informal routes used by cyclists and how these function as part of the wider cycling network – see Section 6.1 of the ES Addendum
- Consideration of the constraints to delivering the Green Infrastructure enhancements described – see Section 2.3 of the ES Addendum.
- Consideration to the impact of increased access to Port Meadow on Oxford Meadows SAC.

The impacts of increased access and recreational pressure on Oxford Meadows SAC was considered as part of a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) (see Appendix K of the original ES). The conclusions of the HRA were agreed with Natural England.

- Assessment of the interaction between improved recreational access and maintaining sites of biodiversity importance
The impacts on biodiversity of making additional areas of land accessible to the public as part of the scheme are discussed within Section 8.2.2 of the ES addendum

- The ES refers to additional recreational surveys being undertaken, these should be provided
- Clarifications on how the loss of recreation land has been assessed, including how the location of green space has been taken into account and the loss of connection due to the removal of community planted woodland.
The information relating to the two points above is provided within Chapter 6 ‘Recreation and Public Access’ and Annex E of the ES addendum.

- Assessment of the short and medium-term health impacts on local communities arising from temporary and permanent loss of recreational land.
The information relating to the point above is provided within the human health subsections of Chapter 5 ‘Local Community’ of the ES addendum.

**Ecology**
Further information is required on the following:
- Environmental Action Plan - minor amendments are required (details are set out in the consultation response on ecology, provided by Sue Lawley)
This has been updated and is provided in the Annex D to the ES addendum.

- Details of the biodiversity net gain calculation.
This information is provided within Section 8.2.2 of the ES addendum.

- Proposals for managing potential negative results (including from fishing and pollution) resulting from removal of vegetation surrounding Kennington Pit.
Our Fisheries team have considered this issue and have no evidence that fishing at the site (illegal or otherwise) would cause damage to biodiversity at Kennington Pit. Proposals for managing potential pollution from sediment run-off are covered in Section 8.3.2 of the ES and in the EAP.

- An annex to the Environmental Statement is required stating the name of the surveyor, their qualification and licence number (where applicable) for each of the ecological surveys.
  This information is provided within Annex H of the ES addendum.

It would also be helpful to have confirmation that species and habitat GIS data have been made available to TVERC and to have the Floodplain Meadows Partnership’s response to the updated hydrology models.

We have contacted TVERC and provided them with the information to access the ecological survey reports. We have also indicated that if we obtain planning permission we will be carrying out more pre-construction surveys and post-project monitoring and we can send them those survey reports as well, if they are interested.

With regard to the Floodplain Meadows Partnership we can confirm that David Gowing of the Floodplain Meadows Partnership responded to the updated hydrology model as follows:

‘I am satisfied that the modeling in the main report has addressed the Hinksey question. If Scenario B, as it is termed, can be delivered on the ground, it would appear to allay concerns about the future ecohydrology of Hinksey Mead.’

As noted by BBOWT, the following further detail is required:
- Further detail on the Landscape Masterplan Drawing to show what is proposed with regard to habitat retention, restoration or creation in the areas identified in the legend as ‘first stage channel’, ‘second stage channel’, ‘proposed habitat creation’, ‘temporary works area to be seeded’
  This information is shown on the revised Landscape Masterplan General Arrangement Plans in Annex F of the ES Addendum.

- Further information on the Landscape and Habitat Management Plan drawings to show how the habitats would be created and managed in the short and long term, including consideration of the potential impacts of construction traffic on the compound areas,

  This information has been set out in the Landscape and Habitat Creation Delivery and Management Plan and illustrated on the revised Landscape and Habitat Management Plans and Landscape General Arrangement Plans, which have been included as part of this submission.

- Mitigation scheme for invasive species should be outlined.

  This information is provided within Annex C of the ES addendum.
More detail is required on long term management including on how
management responsibilities will be defined, details of infrastructure necessary
for management, funding, public access, monitoring and enforcement.

Section 3.5 of the revised Planning Statement and section 7 of the Landscape
and Habitat Creation Delivery and Management Plan provide further information
on the management and maintenance of the scheme.

Further calculations should be carried out and submitted to demonstrate
whether there would be a net gain in biodiversity.

This information is provided within Section 8.2.2 of the ES addendum.

As identified through public consultation, the following information should be
provided:
- Consideration of the impact of the development on the true Malus sylvestris
  (European Crab Apple), including whether these would be destroyed, how rare
  this species is in the area and any necessary arrangements for mitigation, for
  example growing replacements from the same stock and replanting.

The representation indicated that this species is found on North Hinksey
Causeway but we can confirm that no European Crab Apples were identified
during the arboricultural survey within our study area. We have therefore not
considered special mitigation arrangements for this species.

As requested by Vale of White Horse District Council, the following information is
required:
- Details of the impact of the development on Egrove Park Meadow Local Wildlife
  Site.

This information is provided within Section 8.2.2 of the ES addendum.

**Flood Risk**
The Environment Agency (as consultee) have requested a revised Flood Risk
Assessment to address the detailed points as set out in their email from Kerrie
Ginns dated 14th June 2018 which you have seen and which is available on our
website.

A revised Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) Version 6 October 2018, is provided,
addressing the detailed points as requested by the Environment Agency as a
statutory consultee in their letter of 14 June 2018. Appendix A to the FRA has
been updated but the other Appendices to the FRA remain as per the original
submission.
Transport
Information should be provided on how bus traffic will be prioritised at Seacourt Park and Ride.

This information is provided within Annex K of the ES addendum.

Details of mitigation for disruption to bus services during the closure of Old Abingdon Road are also needed.

The Transport Assessment provides a worst case scenario of road closures spanning a period of 15 months. Our preferred contractor has indicated that the two roads are unlikely to be closed at the same time and that Kennington Road may need to be closed for around 8 months. We are aware that the Oxford Bus Company is concerned about the closure of Kennington Road and the disruption to services. During the closure of Kennington Road buses will need to take diversions which will necessitate a slightly longer journey time, for this temporary period.

We are working with our partners on the Oxford Flood Alleviation scheme and have set up a Construction Action Group to prepare and agree a Communications Strategy for the period leading up to construction and during construction. This strategy will include when and how as a partnership we will forewarn residents of disruption on the local and strategic road networks, explain why the disruption is happening and the duration, whilst offering alternative routes or modes of transport. In this way we can help people to adapt to different travel patterns in advance of the disruption but also we can work to encourage people back onto bus services following the disruption.

A detailed assessment of the impact of the loss of spaces at Redbridge Park and Ride is required, including details of any mitigation proposed to overcome impacts. This should include an indication of timings and details of the number of spaces lost.

This information is provided within Chapter 11 ‘Traffic and Transport’ of the ES addendum and within a Technical Note in Annex K.

A list of proposed permanent maintenance accesses should be provided along with drawings to show access design and visibility splays.

Seven Temporary Working Area Drawings have been submitted which include details of the construction accesses. These are listed on the Updated Drawing Submission List – November 2018, accompanying this submission of further information.

Clarification should be provided on whether the access to the A420 would be used by construction vehicles and what type of access this would be.

This information is provided within a Technical Note in Annex K of ES Addendum.

As much further detail should be provided as possible, regarding the routes of travel to sites used for relocation of excavated material.
Whilst there will be some materials deliveries to the site during the construction period the majority of vehicle movements will be related to the removal of excess material from the channel excavation works. The ‘Materials Management Plan’, dated March 2018 and submitted as part of the planning application outlines the various options reviewed for excavating, managing and transporting the material away from the site. Section 3 of the plan reviews the various opportunities for re-use of the material but concludes that due to the site being located wholly within the floodplain all the material must be removed. Section 3.4.9 outlines the restoration schemes within the local area which have indicated they will be in a position to receive alluvium and have extant permissions for with agreed restoration schemes. Once approvals have been obtained for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme more certainty will be secured from the receiving sites to ensure material from this flood alleviation scheme will contribute towards environmental improvements.

Section 4 of the plan (and Section 2.3.3 in the original ES) reviews the transport options for taking the material away from the site, these options included barge, rail and road and concluded road presented the best option. The proposal is for the majority of materials arising from the section of the works between Botley Road and Old Abingdon Road to be removed from site across the fields close to South Hinksey and directly onto the A34 trunk road via South Hinksey Interchange. This will avoid the need for construction traffic to go through North and South Hinksey villages and reduce the impacts on the local road network.

Section 5 of the submitted plan provides a conclusion which includes the next steps in the materials management process. As stated in this section the waste management market place is constantly changing and sites suitable for material re-use are becoming available at short notice. Due to these market conditions it is not possible to identify the exact locations which the material will be taken for re-use until closer to the point of construction of the scheme. The material will also be put onto the CL:AIRE materials register once planning consent has been achieved to help identify and confirm suitable sites for the material.

**Transport – Highway Agency**
- Modelling should be undertaken and the results submitted to ascertain if there would be an impact on the A34 Hinksey Hill junction and A34 mainline in terms of capacity and/or safety.

We have held meetings with Highways England and Oxfordshire County Council transport planners to determine what further evidence can be provided to overcome the safety concerns raised. Oxfordshire County Council have a recently validated traffic model centred on the Hinksey Hill Interchange which they have agreed we can use and we are in the process of agreeing the scope of
the modelling work with Highways England and the County Council transport planners.

We have discussed potential mitigation which we can consider once the modelling is complete. Both Highways England and the County Council transport planners are satisfied that there is a mitigation solution available pending the results of the modelling.

- Further details are required regarding the operation of the field gate access to the A34/Parker Road roundabout.

The Transport Assessment is currently unclear as to the exact flows that can be expected at the A34 South Hinksey junction. Large numbers of HGVs joining the A34 near each other may cause safety concerns in terms of platoons. Given the proximity of the field gate access to the A34/Parker Road roundabout, Highways England would have concerns if there were any impacts to the capacity of this roundabout which could ultimately compromise safety on the A34 mainline.

We have prepared a Technical Note to address these issues and this provided in Annex K of the ES addendum.

Archaeology
The Oxford County Council archaeologist and Historic England have commented that the full scope of the mitigation required has not been provided in the ES. They have confirmed that this can be agreed post-consent. However, you may wish to provide this information prior to determination to avoid delays at a later stage.

We have had meetings with the County and City archaeologist to discuss the initial requirements for archaeological works for construction. We will agree Written Schemes of Investigation with the archaeologists prior to construction in each area and we will discuss and agree a Written Scheme of Investigation with Historic England prior to construction work at Old Abingdon Road.

Heritage
As requested by Vale of White Horse District Council have requested a revised Heritage Impact Assessment to assess:

• The age and time layering of views. The heritage value of trees in the views needs to be clearly ascertained and a deeper understanding of views provided such that a reasoned assessment and proposal methodology can be followed. This would best be provided in a sequence of historic map overlays with views clearly marked and which should cover the JMW Turner views and those once perceived by John Ruskin and his followers in North Hinksey.

We have assessed these issues and they are covered in Chapters 7 and 10 of the ES and in the Heritage Statement, albeit in a written format rather than mapped ‘age and time layering’ of historic landscapes and views.

• Details of the case for tree removal and re-planting and the position of new planting
This information is provided within the Arboricultural annexes (Annex G) of the ES addendum and the revised planting plans submitted with the revised planning application.

- Details on the network of routes crossing the proposal site and their significance including proposals for their retention, enhancement and appreciation.

The scheme is not removing any of the existing routes in the area. Where the channel crosses the routes additional archaeological evidence has been identified during the evaluation works. As a part of the archaeological investigations additional buried east-west causeways were also identified. There is the potential for further information/evidence on existing and buried routes to be gathered through the proposed archaeological mitigation. Research questions will form part of the Written Scheme of Investigation’s (WSI’s) to be agreed with the heritage stakeholders ahead of fieldwork.

Any additional research on the route ways will be carried out in the post-excavation phase of the mitigation, but will be proportionate to the amount of new information/evidence that has been gathered during the fieldwork phase including that already gathered during the pre-application evaluation.

Rights of Way
The following additional information is required:
- Information regarding how long Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will be required for.
- Clarification of why both a short and long diversion route is shown for public rights of way 320/14 and 320/16.
- Confirmation of the arrangements for footpaths 352/1, 352/2 and 353/3. It is not clear that these can be acceptably accommodated over the embankments. Further information should be provided to demonstrate that this would work, or details of alternative routes should be provided.
- The plan should be updated to clearly show what is proposed for all paths and to ensure that it is clear how diverted routes would link in with the routes not affected.

The rights of way team have also made a number of detailed comments on the proposed diversions of several routes, these comments should be considered and details of any amendments provided.

Chapter 6 ‘Recreation and Public Access’ of the ES Addendum provides further clarity on the existing Public Rights of Ways affected by the Scheme. Figures 6.2a and b in Annex A have now been updated to show the proposed temporary and permanent diversionary routes.

Long term management and maintenance
Natural England, BBOWT, the County’s consultant ecologist and others have requested further details about how the site will be managed in the long term. This information is required to allow the longer-term impacts to be assessed.
Further information has been provided in Section 3 of the revised Planning Statement and Section 7 of the Landscape and Habitat Creation Delivery and Management Plan.

**Arboricultural Information**
The Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS), Tree Removals Plan (TRP) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP) should be updated so that they are consistent and refer to the most recent version of the proposal. Context should be provided on why specific tree removals are required. The plans should be checked for proposed tree removals outside of the red line boundary and updated as necessary to ensure tree removals that are needed to facilitate the development are included within the red line boundary. The Tree Protection Plan should be updated to show areas that require tree root protection and include descriptive text and details of the specification should be provided. The AMS and the TPP should be updated to provide details of the above soil surfacing. The documents should consistently reference the appointment of an Arboricultural Clerk of Works. Further detail on tree protection fencing is required. Further detail of mitigation planting is needed. Section 2.2 of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment on protected species should be updated. The details of the further arboricultural information required can be found in the consultation response from Wharton Natural Infrastructure Consultants. This also requests clearer plans showing the first and second stage channel so that the impacts can be fully understood.

The AMS and associated plans have been updated to include the information requested and in line with the revised scheme proposals. This information is provided within Annex G of the ES addendum. We have tried to simplify the plans as far as practicable, however we consider the level of detail provided is proportionate with the scale of the scheme to provide an easily understandable overview without creating numerous large scale plans which could become disjointed to read and get an overall view of the works.

**Minerals** (email dated 19/09/18)
Colleagues in the policy team have commented that it is not clear why the 12 000 tonnes of sand and gravel which is not to be re-used within the site cannot either also be used on site or sold into the market. It seems unclear how this material is to be used and whether it would be put to beneficial use or whether it might end up not being sent to disposal. Therefore, more information on this would be desirable.

As outlined in the materials management plan gravel/river terrace deposits will be reused on site as part of the scheme. This will include the creation of gravel beds and riffles in existing and the new watercourses to improve the biodiversity of the river system. Gravels will also be used in filter drains for the new embankments and mixed with other arisings on site to be used as engineering fill. This will reduce the need for importing material on to the site.

As outlined in paragraph 3.4.5.2 of the materials management plan any surplus gravels not reused on site will be used in other local Environment Agency projects working to similar timescales these include Seacourt Stream
upstream of King’s Lock and Shifford Weir, and a bypass channel for Tumbling Bay on the Bulstake Stream.

We have no intention of sending any surplus gravel, not required for reuse on site, to disposal or for sale.

**Other issues raised during consultation**

**Bridge Design**

A number of consultees, including OCC’s landscape consultant, the Urban Design team at Oxford City Council and Vale of White Horse District Council have expressed concern about the design of the bridges. I recommend that you consider whether the design and materials proposed for these structures could be amended to address the concerns, reflect the context and fit better with development plan policy aimed at ensuring high quality design and protecting Oxford’s green open spaces and rights of way network. If it is not possible to amend the materials, consideration should be given to enhancing the design through incorporating public art.

The bridge design and structure has been explained in Section 7.1.7 of the Environmental Statement. We have also provided more detail on the bridge and structure design summary in Section 7.1.7 of the ES addendum.

In summary the span and height above the new channel of the proposed bridge at Willow Walk is set by the requirements for flood water conveyance during flood events and freeboard levels required by the Environment Agency consenting arm; the thickness of the base of the bridge is directly related to the design loading and span; the width of the bridge by the need to carry occasional vehicular traffic and the height of the parapets are set by the Highway Authority standards for footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. The width of the proposed bridge is approximately the same as the current stone bridge.

During the public consultation in the summer of 2017 people were given the opportunity to comment on the design of the handrails for the bridges and materials. The consultation is reported in the Statement of Community Involvement and the related appendix C. People were asked about their views on panels and incorporating cut out designs. 73% of people did not want panels with cut-out designs incorporated into the bridges. People had safety concerns and felt that these were fussy, would increase costs, and would invite vandalism.

We understand that concerns have been raised regarding the design of the bridges. To try and aid understanding we have prepared a sketch of Willow Walk provided in Plates 3 and 4 within the ES Addendum.

Further explanation regarding the materials being used for the structures is given in the ES addendum Section 7.1.7.
Email query received 1/11/18 relating to an email from an individual making suggestions for potential improvements to the bridge design regarding ‘green edges’ to Willow Walk Bridge.

Green bridges are primarily used for situations where important habitats and corridors are being significantly fragmented by roads and railways, where high-speed traffic and inhospitable habitat presents a barrier to connectivity. We do not consider that the proposal as submitted causes significant habitat or landscape fragmentation. Although we have not considered this proposal as an alternative within the Environmental Impact Assessment we have given it some consideration since the issue was raised with us. A summary of our conclusions is given.

If green edges were to be included on the Willow Walk bridge outside the balustrade the width of the bridge would by necessity increase, leading to a requirement for a greater land take at either end of the bridge, a consequent increase in the number of trees to be felled and a greater visual impact. For these reasons we would not want to pursue this option.

The possibility of incorporating a green verge into the bridge within the balustrade is limited due to the depth of soil we could provide to sustain growth. There is less than 150mm available for soil in the areas over the service ducts, which would leave the ducts with little cover and protection. If we were to pursue a green verge as a possibility the overall depth of the bridge deck would need to be increased to provide the protection to the service ducts and to avoid the vegetation from drying out in summer months. An increase in the depth of the deck would lead to an increase in the height of the bridge with a subsequent greater visual impact, increase in land take at both ends and an increase in the number of trees to be felled.

The current proposal aims to encourage people to look over the balustrades to view the landscape either side. If we were to swap the stone setts as proposed with long grass it would counter this intention. The alternative of closely mown verges would not provide continuity of landscape or habitat along Willow Walk and as explained above would lead to patches of brown grass or bare earth, for much of the year. This would not provide a wildlife corridor.

In addition the current design includes stone setts running along either side of the bridge as a deterrent to discourage horses from walking too near to the sides of the bridge, thus enabling us to install a 1.4m balustrade rather than a 1.8m balustrade normally required on bridleway bridges over water. A mown grass verge would not provide an effective deterrent and would introduce a new maintenance operation.

For these reasons we have not pursued this option further.
Amendments to planting
I understand that Oxford Preservation Trust have made some suggestions about changes that they would like to see to the Landscape Masterplan, including a reduction in tree planting on Jewson’s Land to screening only, the planting of MG4 grassland on the remainder of this land and planting of trees and shrubs currently proposed for this area elsewhere within the application site.

Oxfordshire County Council’s Consultant Ecologist and Environmental Strategy Manager have confirmed that these changes seem reasonable in principle. If it is proposed to take these changes forward the application will need to be formally amended and the impact of the changes will need to be assessed.

As noted the Oxford Preservation Trust suggested that MG4 grassland could be translocated to Jewson’s land as part of the mitigation package. This seemed like a good suggestion and we have investigated the possibility of progressing this. We contacted the Floodplain Meadow Partnership who alerted us to the possibility that the presence of scrub on the land could indicate both a higher nutrient level and drier ground than the surrounding meadow. A site visit by Jacobs’ ecologists reinforced these views.

A review of the topographic survey for the area shows that the existing ground levels are in the order of 100 to 150mm higher than the areas of land which currently sustains MG4a. Given the MG4a is at the drier end of the recommended conditions for sustainability, this may result in the Jewson land being drier than would support MG4a. It is also noted that the existing meadow around Jewson’s is not designated as MG4a despite being managed in a similar way to the rest of the meadow. If we were to progress this option we would need to undertake more detailed soil sampling and checking of groundwater levels in this area to determine the suitability for translocating the MG4a turf, with no guarantee of success.

Given the above uncertainties and the increased risk that the translocation of MG4a would be unsuccessful we have decided not to pursue this suggestion but to retain the Jewson area as indicated within the original planning application as submitted.

We have informed the Oxford Preservation Trust of this decision and that we still intend to carry out soil testing of the area to further inform our understanding of the situation.

Vale of White Horse District Council have requested that proposed planting is revisited so it better reflects the local landscape character and screens existing development particularly that on Botley Road. In particular, they support the planting of willow (Salix), alder (Alnus glutinosa), hazel (Corylus avellana) and small leaved lime (Tilia cordata), but not the planting of ash (Fraxinus excelsior) or sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus).

We have taken this into account and this request is covered in the revised planting plans submitted.
Notification of landowners and tenants
Following the public consultation on the planning application, Ferry Hinksey Charitable Trust have stated that they own land affected by the application and were not notified about the submission of the application by the applicant. A tenant of the Ferry Hinksey Charitable Trust has also stated that they were not notified. These parties are clearly now aware of the application; however, Oxfordshire County Council will be holding a further consultation period when the further information is submitted further to the Regulation 25 request above. This could present an opportunity for the applicant to serve notice on any parties that were missed initially.

We have notified the Ferry Hinksey Charitable Trust and their tenant of this submission of further information and informed them that there will be a further consultation carried out by Oxfordshire County Council. We have also taken the opportunity to notify other landowners, agricultural tenants and lessees who have been made know to us since the submission of the planning application, and have informed them of your forthcoming consultation.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Revisions
As you will be aware, a revised NPPF was published on 24th July 2018. As the planning application was submitted prior to that, it refers to the 2012 version. It is recommended that you consider whether any amendments are needed to any of the planning application documents to reflect the changes to the NPPF, which is a material consideration.

We have prepared a revised Planning Statement updating Section 5.2 and Section 6 to reflect the new NPPF.

November 2018