Application no: MW.0039/16
Proposal: The extraction of sand, gravel and clay, creation of a new access, processing plant, offices with welfare accommodation, weighbridge, concrete plant and silt water lagoon system with site restoration to agriculture and nature conversation including lakes with recreational after uses and the permanent diversion of footpath 171/15 and creation of new footpaths
Location: Land at Fullamoor Plantation, Clifton Hampden, Abingdon,

Transport Development Control

Recommendation:

Objection

On behalf of the Local Highway Authority, I recommend the application for planning permission is refused in the interests of highway safety, convenience and sustainability and in accordance with Paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy 02 of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan.

The submitted transport statement suggests new trips resulting from the proposed the development would be insignificant in terms of traffic impact, given the existing flows on the local highway network. This is a stance which I concurred with previously; however, recent County Council traffic surveys and subsequent modelling show excessive queuing and junction blocking bringing about a situation best described as gridlock. In such circumstances the impact of additional trips is disproportionate and very few trips may add to delay significantly. Frustrated drivers merging and manoeuvring indiscriminately will have an adverse impact on road safety as will the increased likelihood of rear end shunt collisions resulting from queuing, especially where forward visibility may be limited. In addition, idling vehicles would add to particulate and carbon dioxide emissions. The Local Highway Authority considers the traffic impact of this development would be unacceptable and would meet the NPPF criteria of 'severe harm' so as to justify the refusal of planning permission.

Key issues:

- Objection on the grounds of traffic impact as summarised above.
- Access – proposed junction with A415 is acceptable in principle and subject to condition and agreement under Section 278 Highways Act.
- Routeing of HGV traffic is in accordance with County Council's Lorry Routeing.
- Footway improvements adjacent Clifton Hampden Primary School are welcomed.

Legal agreement required to secure*:

An agreement under S106 Town & Country Planning Act is required to secure the following developer obligations:-

- Routeing of HGVs
- Highway Works under S278 Highways Act-
    - Footway Improvements adjacent primary school
    - Access works

Conditions*:

Prior to first use of the development hereby permitted the means of site access is to be formed and laid out to the approval of the Local Planning Authority, constructed in accordance with the local authority's specifications and all ancillary works specified shall be undertaken.

Visibility splays shall be formed, laid out and constructed in accordance with detailed plans, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the first occupation of the development.

Prior to implementation of the development, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the developer shall comply with the requirements of the CTMP in all respects.

Informatives*:

Mud and other debris must not be dragged or otherwise deposited on the highway.
Except for lighting that may be required in accordance with the new access no light source shall be directly visible from the highway.

*****Please note the recommended obligations, conditions and informatives would not resolve the objection set out within this consultation and are provided should the Planning Authority discard that objection.

Detailed comments:

Traffic Impact

The County Council was consulted previously on the proposed development and did not raise any objections; however since that time the County Council commissioned detailed surveys and modelling work on adjacent junctions in Culham and Sutton Courtenay adjacent to the Culham Crossing and has carried out queue length surveys at the signalised staggered crossroads of A415, B4015 and High Street at Clifton Hampden.

The proposed development would generate new vehicular trips through a sensitive part of the highway network, at the signalised junction of Abingdon Road and Tollgate Road. At peak times queuing at the adjacent signalised, shuttle working Culham Bridges results in the blocking of the bridge and adjacent junctions, to the north the signalised junction of the A415 and to the South the priority junction of Abingdon Road and Appleford Road. The County Council has investigated how additional traffic might be accommodated on the highway network by optimising and maximising the signal timings. However, this merely worsened traffic queues and delay to the A415.

The A415 is an important corridor in the local highway network and it is of paramount importance that appropriate priority is given to this A-road to maintain operational capacity. If exit blocking occurs at these points in the network then it can have a severe and detrimental impact on the wider highway network. Unfortunately, giving priority to the A415, results in blocking back of the junction of Appleford Road and Abingdon Road on the southern side of the river crossing. Additional trips through the A415 Tollgate Road junction will further exacerbate this situation and would require greater priority to be provided.

The blocking back results in a situation akin to gridlock with queues slow to disperse and highway users performing ‘unorthodox’ manoeuvres and blocking straight ahead travel. Any new trips will add to the delay experienced at these junctions, increase queueing and the periods and instances of blocking of junctions and carriageways. Due to the gridlock the impact of additional trips is disproportionate and very few trips may add to delay significantly. Frustrated drivers merging and manoeuvring indiscriminately will have an adverse impact on road safety as will the and increased likelihood of rear end shunt collisions resulting from queuing, especially where forward visibility may be limited, for example at the sharp bend of Appleford Road in Sutton Courtenay. In addition, idling vehicles would add to particulate and carbon dioxide emissions. The Local Highway Authority considers the traffic impact of this development would be unacceptable and would meet the NPPF criteria of ‘severe harm’ so as to justify the refusal of planning permission.

The Local Highway Authority has surveyed and modelled this part of the network and investigated potential improvements, including optimising and biasing signal times and introducing signals at the junction of Appleford Road and Abingdon Road. Unfortunately there is little to be gained from such alterations; altering signal times on the bridge only transfers the ‘blocking back’ from one junction to another, i.e. favouring northbound traffic might prevent blocking of the Appleford Road / Abingdon Road junction but would intensify ‘blocking back’ at the signalised junction of Abingdon Road (A415) and Tollgate Road and vice-versa; similarly any benefit gained from introducing signals at the Appleford Road Abingdon Road junction would be countered by ‘blocking back’ elsewhere or increased queuing on Appleford Road.

In the longer term the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan includes a new Thames river crossing which will relieve pressure on this part of the network; however until such improvement is realised the Local Highway Authority recommends against any development in Sutton Courtenay or Culham that would add new trips to this part of the network.

At the signalised staggered crossroads of A415, B4015 and High Street excessive queueing has been observed at peak times, including queuing beyond the site access. New trips will add to this queuing not only in simple terms by joining the queue but also at the junction arm A415 West arm will block straight ahead movement if they cannot pass stationary vehicles waiting to turn right. Again this would result in increased delay, risk of collision and increased emissions. In addition, vehicles trying to join the queue from the site may pose a risk to safety by blocking the carriageway.

The application references the existing flows on the network and at these junctions and identifies new trips would equate to only a very small percentage in comparison. For that reason the statement asserts that impact would be negligible and no junction analysis is provided. Given the sensitivity of the network and adjacent junctions that has been identified through the County's own investigations I do not consider that assumption is appropriate and recommend the application is refused for the reasons set-out above.

Access

Access proposals are demonstrated on the submitted plan 4200/SK/201 and are acceptable in principle and subject to any requirements of a Section 278 Agreement (Highways Act). Visibility at the proposed access would be in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges; the highway authority require that any area of land not lying within the limits of the existing highway boundary required to form part of the junction to the proposed gates or visibility splay must be indicated on a dedication plan and the land would be formally offered for adoption as public highway. Vehicle tracking has been demonstrated at the junction and shows some slight overrunning but it is noted the tracked vehicle is 16.4m in length as opposed to more typical tipping lorries, which are generally less 10m long.

I note farm vehicles would use the proposed site access. I am satisfied the proposed access would accommodate those movements appropriately and given those trips are not new to the network they would not have any significant traffic impact.

Routeing

HGV traffic is proposed to be routed in accordance with the Council's Lorry Routeing Strategy as demonstrated on submitted plan 4200/03; this is considered appropriate and must be secured through planning obligation.

The proposal would add to HGV trips through Abingdon Town Centre. Whilst the significance of these trips is not assessed in terms of the flows and delay on the highway network, there may be an implication to air quality and further consultation should be sought from the relevant body.

Off-site Works

The developer has offered footway improvements adjacent the Primary School, detailed on plan 4200/SK/202, which are welcomed and would be subject to Section 278 Agreement (Highways Act). However, delivery of such footway works may impose upon the ability of the applicant to improve vehicular capacity at this junction as may be necessary to resolve the reason for refusal set-out above.

Public Rights of Way

Public Rights of Way neighbouring and crossing the site would be affected by the development and I understand this matter is being considered by relevant team.

Officer's Name: Geoffrey Arnold
Officer's Title: Principal Engineer
Date: 09/11/17

Application no: MW.0039/16
Proposal: The extraction of sand, gravel and clay, creation of a new access, processing plant, offices with welfare accommodation, weighbridge, concrete plant and silt water lagoon system with site restoration to agriculture and nature conversation including lakes with recreational afteruses and the permanent diversion of footpath 171/15 and creation of new footpaths
Location: Land at Fullamoor Plantation, Clifton Hampden, Abingdon,

Transport Strategy & Policy

Recommendation:

Objection

****UPDATED RESPONSE - NOVEMBER 2017****

The proposal, as submitted, would prejudice the route of a Link Road and Thames River Crossing and as such would harm the County Council's ability to deliver its Local Transport Plan and support future growth within the County.

The adopted Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 Connecting Oxfordshire has within it the following scheme:

Science Vale Transport Strategy proposal SV 2.13: Investigating new links to Culham Science Centre including a new Culham river crossing, Clifton Hampden Bypass and a road connecting Culham Science Centre to the B4015 to link to the Eastern Arc of Oxford.

Key issues:

Protection of potential route of Culham river crossing and associated infrastructure - The proposed land use and a future lake would encroach upon a potential alignment of proposed Culham river crossing. The applicant has subsequently submitted a response to an objection from OCC Transport Strategy in May 2016. However, this response does not alleviate concerns of officers.

Legal agreement required to secure:

An agreement under S106 Town & Country Planning Act is required to secure the following developer obligations:-

- Access for Oxfordshire County Council or its contractors to the potential alignment of the Culham river crossing, to make any necessary assessment and construction to go ahead within defined timeframes, should that be the chosen alignment.

- Retain the potential alignment of the Culham river crossing that is affected, or reinstate it to a suitable condition to allow road construction to go ahead within defined timeframes, should that be the chosen alignment.

Detailed comments:

The adopted Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 Connecting Oxfordshire has within it the following scheme:-

Science Vale Transport Strategy proposal SV 2.13: SV 2.13 Delivering improved Access to Culham Science Centre to improve connectivity between Science Vale and the Eastern Arc of Oxford. Investigating a new road from north Didcot and associated new Thames River crossing, and a road connecting Culham Science Centre to the B4015 (north of Clifton Hampden).

The river crossing scheme is essential to support the growth within the adopted Vale of White Horse District Local Plan Pt1 and the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033. These plans rely heavily on the river crossing, amongst other infrastructure requirements, for both residential and employment growth. Modelling work submitted as part of the Vale's Local Plan Pt1 evidence (Evaluation of Transport impact) has shown that this road, along with other transport schemes in the Science Vale area, are necessary to mitigate the impact of the planned growth. This has been accepted by the planning inspectorate and an appropriate method of delivering and mitigating growth. Anything that prejudices this strategy should be resisted.

Furthermore, recent work associated with planning applications in the area has demonstrated the need for a new river crossing earlier than expected. This is due to capacity issues at the current river crossing points given their constraints and designation. This means that housing growth in the area is restricted until a new crossing of the Thames is provided. If the minerals application prevents one of the options, this could prejudice growth across two local planning authorities. The County Council currently has an Expression of Interest to central government for funding of the river crossing amongst other infrastructure proposals. If this is successful, the County Council will need to construct the river crossing by 2025. This revised programme could conflict with quarrying and restoration timing.

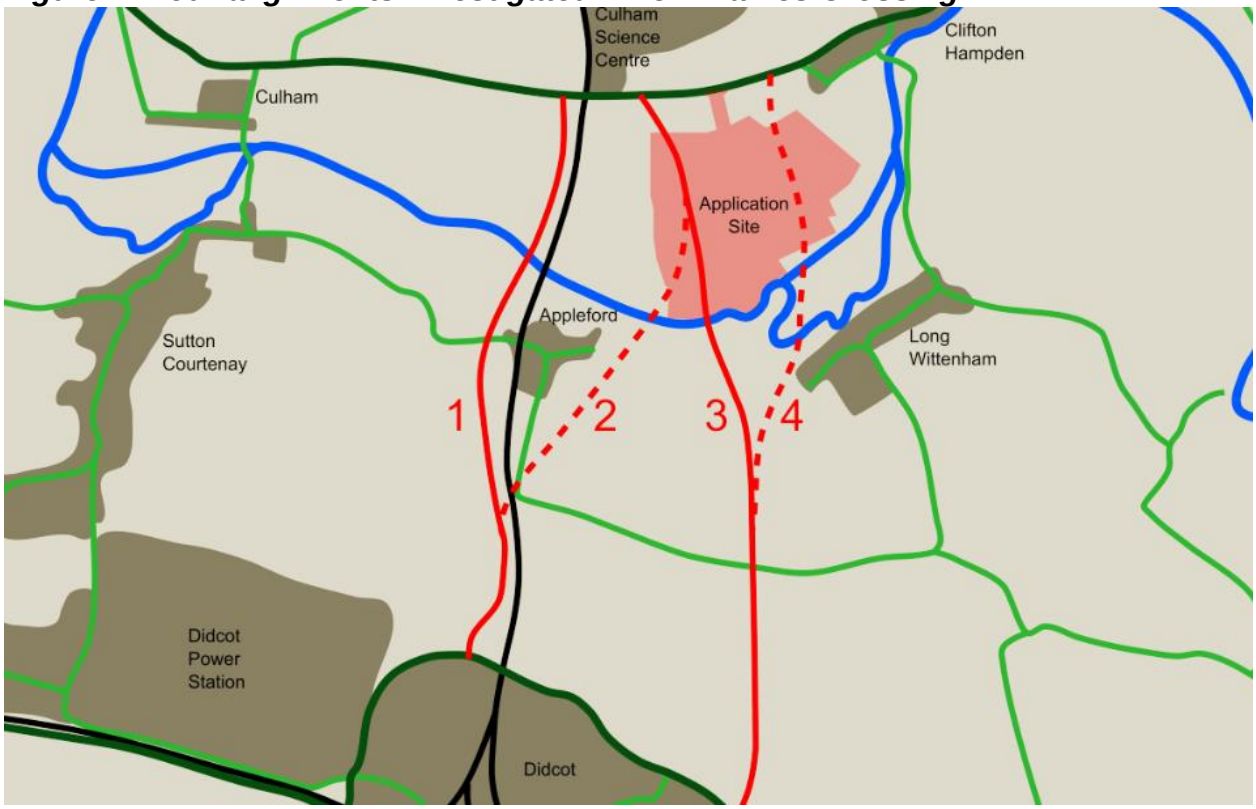
Four alignments have been considered for the proposed Didcot to Culham link road (river crossing element of the above scheme), numbered 1 to 4 from west to east (figure 1). Alignment 1 runs to the west of the Oxford to Didcot railway line, and therefore does not encroach upon the area under consideration in this planning application. Alignments 2 and 3 share a broadly similar alignment from the A415 around 50 metres west of Fullamoor Farm to a point approximately 200m south of the western extremity of 'Grasshill Covert', where they diverge with Alignment 2 heading south-west from this point and crossing the River Thames at a point broadly corresponding with the south-western corner of the 'red line' relating to this application. Alignment 3 continues in a broadly southerly direction crossing the Thames approximately 800m south of Grasshill Covert and continuing to the B4015. Alignment 4 adjoins the A415 approximately 100m east of South Cottage, heading first south-east for around 500m then bending south-west to cross the Thames to the east of the meander adjacent to the weir.

Early work as indicated that Alignments 1 and 3 perform well. However, OCC is currently conducting an Options Assessment Report to inform optioneering further.

Alignment 1 does not encroach upon the area under consideration in this planning application.

Part of Alignment 3 is within the area under consideration for this application. This has recently been revised to avoid a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) due to a Historic England objection. This has resulted in wider safeguarding area that has shifted east.

Figure 1: Four alignments Investigated River Thames Crossing



The adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan contains an area of safeguarding for the Science Vale Thames Crossing. This is shown on Figure 2. Alignment 3 falls within either the area shown for 'safeguarding' within Vale of White Horse or for 'investigation' within South Oxfordshire.

The Adopted South Oxfordshire Core Strategy does not contain any area of safeguarding for the River Thames Crossing. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2012 in advance of the proposal. The Core Strategy is now under review for a new Local Plan and as part of this process, the safeguarding has been modified further. This is shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 2: Revision of Safeguarding Map E13 the adopted Vale of White Horse District Council's Local Plan

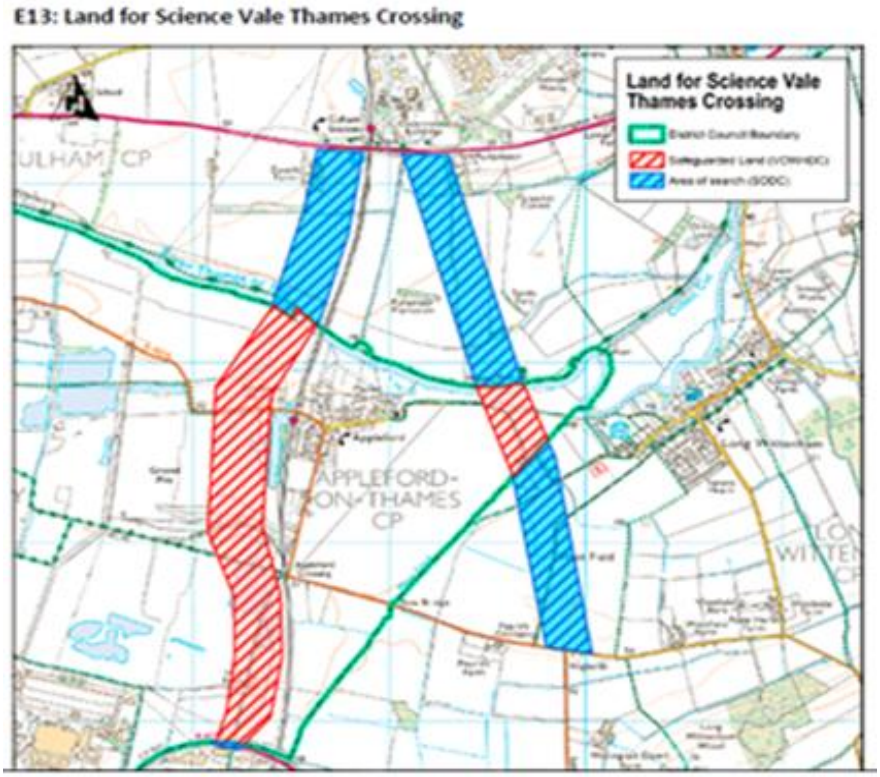
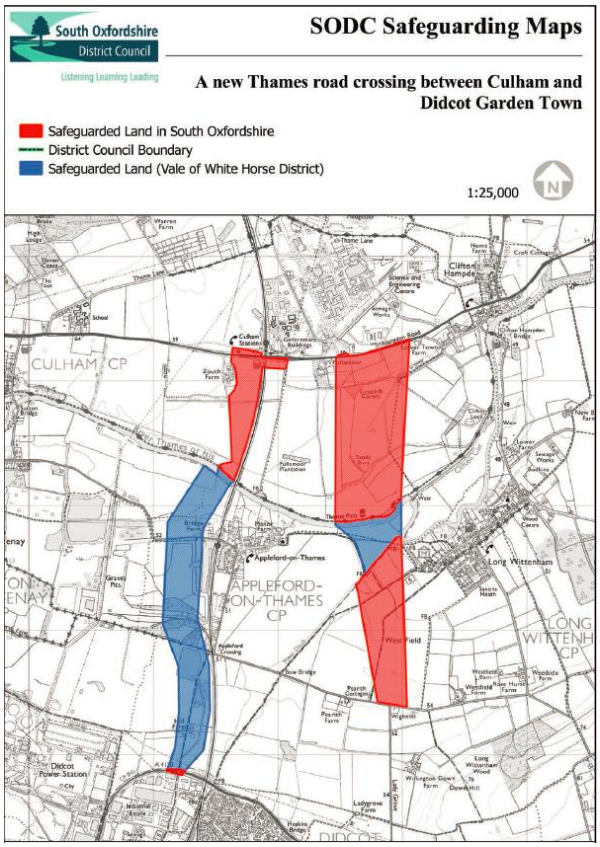


Figure 3: Revision of Safeguarding Map E13 sought by Oxfordshire County Council and Vale of White Horse District Council.



Although the wording in the Transport Assessment (paras 2.25, 3.3 and 4.1) states that the current application 'respects' the alignments for the proposed new road, the proposal shown in application area plan C6_LAN_001 fully coincides with the proposed Alignment 3. This is compounded by revised safeguarding (above). However, it is recognised that this area of safeguarding is wide due to local constraints and the ability to be flexible with regards to the exact alignment. The actual road corridor would be much narrower.

Paragraph 2.25 states that 'the Adopted Policies Map E13 (Appendix E of the draft Local Plan) indicates the extent of the safeguarded land. Lying within close proximity to the potential new road link, the geographical extent of the proposed Fullamoor Quarry has been revised (reduced) to account for the potential new infrastructure'. The reduction in the size of the application site to the west is noted: however this appears to still have an effect on Alignment 3 (previous and revised safeguarding) under consideration. Alignment 1 remains unaffected by any change to the application area.

The County Council is continuing with scheme development to determine a preferred option. An information document was issued in January 2016, showing indicative alignments and OCC submit that the alignment of the road should be protected. A Technical Note previously sent to the applicant, 'Didcot to Culham River Crossing – Requirements for Ground Condition' (Atkins 12th March 2015), offers three options to protect the alignment. This position is maintained, and the three options in summary are as follows:

1. Retain a corridor, which is safeguarded, which will remain undisturbed (i.e. no gravel extraction).
2. Once the ground has been disturbed (i.e. gravel extraction), an embankment, or where the route goes over proposed water an appropriate solution, will need to be constructed by the developer, using an engineered fill from the formation level of the gravel pit.
3. The developers extract gravel from the whole area and make a S106 contribution for the construction of a piled-viaduct or a piled-road construction including payment of a commuted sum to OCC for the maintenance of any structures.

Option 1 of the above presents the least risk to the County Council, in terms of timing and security of being able to deliver the Culham river crossing should the preferred route alignment coincide with the quarry application.

Additionally, Drawing C6_LAN_007 ('Restoration Scheme') appears to show that Alignment 3 for the proposed Culham river crossing would need to cross the proposed angling/small vessel sailing lake as well as the River Thames. It would also be in close proximity to the area referred to as Silt Management area 1 on Drawing CUL-3000-OPA ('Operations Area'). Although minor adjustment to the current proposed alignment may be possible to ensure that the latter area is avoided by new road infrastructure, if this alignment is eventually preferred, the size and location of the proposed lake make adjustments to the proposed Alignment 3 to avoid it impractical. It is suggested that the lake in this area be visited again to see if the proposed road alignment could be avoided.

If mineral extraction is carried out in the location of potential bridge buttresses, it will fundamentally affect the construction method of the bridge abutments and as a consequence impact on costs, route choice, viability and the ability to provide a bridge between Didcot and Culham at all. This would put significant housing and employment growth in the area at risk.

Officer's Name:	Jason Sherwood		
Officer's Title:	Locality Manager	**Date:**	06 November 2017