

Comments on Planning Application MW.0028/18 Flood Alleviation Scheme Oxford.  
South Hinksey Parish Council.

## Introduction and Background

1. South Hinksey Village lies at the heart of the construction area of this project and its residents, environment and way of life will be affected for the full four years of construction. It is for this reason that these comments relate entirely to the construction works and its operational centre (the “Works”) and not to the design of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme itself (the “Scheme”) once implemented.
2. The “way of life” of residents in our village will be changed significantly during the years of construction as we take the full force of the worst effects of the Works. We are willing to accept most of this in return for the anticipated benefits of the Scheme. There are however three proposals contained within the Works that are dangerous and unreasonable, making life for some residents of South Hinksey unbearable for years. It is these three areas that our comments focus on plus one not mentioned in the planning application. They are:
  - The movement of spoil
  - The siting of the Works area
  - The diversion of the Devil’s Backbone
  - Communication and the Community Infrastructure Levy

Our comments and requests are detailed under these headings below and our recommendations to you are repeated together at paragraph 4 in bold. We emphasise that our concerns cannot be dismissed on the basis that measures proposed are temporary. This significant project will last for four or more years - these works are better defined as semi-permanent.

3. We wish to make clear:
  - The Parish Council and residents were **not** specifically consulted on the operation of this project despite the proposals for the Works affecting our environment so significantly. We did attend the various roadshows prior to the planning application but these focused on the design of the project and not the operation.
  - We have raised our concerns with the Environment Agency (EA) and their response has been to listen but to intimate that our requests are all too late.
  - The hundreds of poorly organised planning documents (in terms of public presentation and accessibility) show scant regard to the worst effects of the Works on South Hinksey village.
4. We are concerned that the EA may not be minded to modify the construction plans, even in light of the Parish Council’s and resident’s concerns which have been articulated directly to them. Consequently, our hope is that this planning committee will condition any planning application approval to provide certain mitigation for our community against the worst impacts of construction.

**We therefore ask and recommend that should planning permission be agreed the committee condition the planning application in 6 ways.**

- a) That the movement of lorries, machinery and other large vehicles and equipment is reconsidered in consultation with stakeholders (including South Hinksey Parish Council). That the resulting Transport Plan details all options available and shows evidence of the minimising of risk, danger, pollution, noise and general nuisance to residents, local roads and the Oxford ring road (A34). Any resulting Plan should limit heavy traffic to working hours (as defined below), limit traffic volume during commuting hours, give priority to local traffic, and stop heavy vehicles from passing within 100m of any residential boundary. Consequently, we propose that**
- no vehicle passes within 100m of the closest residential boundary; and**
  - all waiting vehicles shall switch off their engines; and**
  - no vehicle shall enter Parker Road, the roundabout, the slip roads or the carriageway bridge until the previous vehicle has joined the Oxford ring road (A34); and**
  - all traffic exiting and entering the Works area is subject to Active Traffic management; and**
  - local traffic takes priority; and**
  - the working hours for vehicle movement to be Monday to Friday 10am to 3.30pm (with the exception of public holidays when no work is allowed); and**
  - all other working hours to be Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm (with the exception of public holidays when no work is allowed); and**
  - this transport Plan to be available for public consultation and agreed by the Planning Authority before works begin.**
- b) That a buffer zone (defined by the existing field marked on the application map) immediately to the north of the village is provided to protect the main residential settlement of South Hinksey Village. No vehicle movement, works or other project support is allowed within this zone.**
- c) That the Devil's Backbone path is re-provided to the same usable standards as the current path.**
- d) That a project communication and management plan is provided to the committee before works begin. This plan to include high level access to decision making and management for all key stakeholders including South Hinksey Parish Council.**
- e) That South Hinksey Parish Council is financially compensated for the additional administrative burden placed on it from the project**
- f) That the dispersal of the Community Infrastructure Levy is reconsidered to include South Hinksey Parish in compensation for the real effects felt by the delivery of this project.**

## Detailed Comments

### Movement of Spoil

5. The plans outline that large articulated lorries will move spoil from the 5km site through fields bordering gardens in South Hinksey Village and onto Parker Road roundabout, at a frequency of one in or out about every 3 or 4 minutes. This operation will be for 9 months per year for each of the 4 years. The winter months are not proposed to be used because of the risk of flooding and poor winter conditions within the Flood Plain.
6. Parker Road roundabout and bridge were designed to provide access for village residents onto the north and south carriageways of the Oxford ring road (A34). It is by design and scale built for cars - a very narrow bridge (barely 2 cars passing space) and little manoeuvrable space. Speed restrictions do not apply on this section of the Oxford ring road (A34) so traffic is usually heavy and travelling at 50 to 70 miles an hour. In addition, the Hinksey Interchange slip road, allowing cars to continue around the Oxford ring road or along the A34 is within 300m of the South Hinksey village slip road. Consequently, cars and lorries are cutting across lanes at all times and at speed. It is a difficult junction to use for residents, and those with lower powered engines can wait some time to be able to move off safely.
7. Heavily laden lorries of the nature shown in the planning application will have to traverse a small car sized roundabout to join the Oxford ring road (A34) from a standing start into this fast moving and closely spaced traffic. They may well wait several minutes to do this safely. In addition, those joining the Oxford ring road (A34) on the north side will have to manoeuvre across the narrow road bridge. If this can be done (it is not clear whether or not this has been tested), it will be slow and difficult.
8. Without the implementation of the conditions requested in (4) above, the unacceptable consequences of this for residents are:
  - The entry and exit of these large laden lorries to and from a field butting up to gardens in the village brings pollution, noise and dust right into the heart of the village. No mitigation for this is offered by the application and without change it is unlikely that any could. Residents health and well-being and the quiet enjoyment of their homes would be affected beyond what is reasonable.
  - Residents will be “corralled” in the village behind lorries waiting to join the Oxford ring road (A34). This is the only vehicular route in and out and it will render our local roads unusable.
  - Lorries waiting to “take their turn” to join the Oxford ring road (A34) are shown waiting in a field bordering alongside residents’ gardens. It is obvious that there may be a significant number of these, and several lorries at any one time may be waiting to join the road. The lorries will be noisy, polluting and dominate the environment. They will render the gardens of a significant number of residents unusable for nine months of the year for four years and require windows and doors to be kept closed to mitigate noise and pollution inside houses. The rest of the village will hear, see and be affected by such a

large volume of diesel polluting lorries on our doorsteps. For some the lorries will be so close it will be as if they are in their gardens.

9. Other consequences.

It seems obvious that this volume of lorry movement onto the Oxford ring road will have negative consequences beyond those for the residents of South Hinksey village. The A34, as it passes by South Hinksey, is the western arc of the Oxford ring road - because of this it serves as both a "trunk road" and one of Oxford's "local roads". The traffic is fast moving and dominated by lorries. As a consequence, any accidents or hold-ups on this section of the A34 affect the Oxford ring road and all roads leading to it. Hold-ups and accidents are already a very regular occurrence and disruption to local roads as a consequence are frequent and damaging to the economy and road users. Large laden lorries at this frequency entering the Oxford ring road (A34) from a standing start, into fast moving traffic and so close to the South Hinksey interchange must increase the likelihood of accident, injury and hold-ups with all the knock-on consequences for Oxford and its immediate surroundings that are well known to all in the area.

10. These proposals for the movement of spoil from the site, without the conditions and considerations proposed here, are impractical, dangerous and will have an unacceptable effect on the lives of South Hinksey residents for years. In addition, it is difficult for the Parish Council to understand why the Transport Authority and District Councils are not objecting to the very likely negative affects within the Oxford ring and local roads leading to it.

11. The Parish Council has proposed to the EA that they modify their plans in one of the following ways:

- a) The project site borders a railway goods line with a large and accessible railway siding area. The spoil should be taken by rail to a point where it can be more safely and reasonably transported to its final destination.
- b) Should the transport authority find the risk to the Oxford ring road A34 acceptable then:
  - a temporary slip road is created at the point of the former layby between North and South Hinksey so that lorries can enter and exit at that point keeping danger, disruption, pollution and nuisance at some distance from the main settlement of South Hinksey village; or
  - restrictions are placed on the route of lorries as they pass onto the Oxford road (A34) as proposed in (4) above.

### **The siting of the "Works Area"**

12. The project site runs for some 5km and covers many fields. The 3 fields chosen to be used as the "Works Area" are:

- Two large fields in the northern area of the village, one butting up against and bordering many gardens in the village. Another smaller field in the eastern area of the village. A number of other work areas are noted and called "the haul route" which we have been informed will form the route taken by large

laden lorries as they enter, exit and move around the site. Effectively this will create an inner ring road around our village for lorries!

To give an appreciation of the scale of this “work area” surrounding South Hinksey on 2 sides, it is larger than the main settlement of the village.

13. In addition, it has been estimated that as many as 75+ employees will be working on the site at any one time increasing the daytime population of South Hinksey village by about 40%. Our village has no public transport links, shop, café, post office, public toilets or public car parks. The roads are narrow (no passing in many places), the pavements are narrow and the village is “dark”. In essence, employees will have to be transported to the site and anything they need will have to be provided separately on site within the work area. Disruption of this scale so close and within a small community is unacceptable and unnecessary.

14. The unacceptable consequences of this for residents

All of these proposals for the siting of the Works area will have a significant effect on our way of life for years but the issue that is unacceptable to us and is difficult for the Parish Council to understand is why the large field to the north of the village (that butts up to residents’ gardens and can be seen by most residents) has been chosen. We have been informed that this will be the area for portacabins, toilets, machinery, cars, lighting together with everything else you would expect to see to support a large scale and long-term engineering project. It will produce noise, nuisance and disruption. Currently this field has sheep in it and is used by walkers and those wishing to enjoy the countryside around the City. There are other fields that could have been chosen to site this disruption and the choice of this one shows a disregard for the lives of those living with this project.

15. The Parish Council has proposed to the EA that they modify their plans to:

- provide a “one field” buffer in the northern area of the village to mitigate the noise, nuisance, disruption and pollution of the “works area”. This buffer to be the first of the northerly fields (as shown in plans as “the Work Area”). Another field is identified to replace this, with the agreement of the Planning Authority and in consultation with the Parish Council, should this be necessary.

### **The diversion of the Devil’s Backbone footpath**

16. South Hinksey sits within the Oxford ring road. The road access into and out of the village is, by necessity, via the Oxford ring road (A34) and the cycle and walking route is via the ancient Devil’s Backbone footpath. This raised path is tarmacked across the flood plain and importantly gives access to public transport, medical, social and shopping facilities in New Hinksey and on the Abingdon Road. The path is well used by residents, walkers on many of the Oxfordshire scenic routes and the residents of New Hinksey and Grandpont (including schools and other groups) who wish to exercise and enjoy the beautiful surroundings and including those that do not otherwise have access to cars.

17. This application plans to keep this path open for the duration of the project but to divert it through the flood plain without the height or solidity provided by the current path. In effect, the diversion will become a trudge through wet and muddy fields. As plans stand, the diversion may be impassable during the winter months and unsuitable for bicycles, pushchairs, wheelchairs and anyone who is not able-bodied.

18. The unacceptable consequences of this for residents

These plans will stop access to public transport for large parts of the year and deprive residents of reasonable walking and cycling access into the City. This is a multi-million-pound project and to reprovide an essential path like this to the standard that it is now would be relatively simple and affordable. Not to do this shows once again a disregard for the residents of South Hinksey Village. Should Plans remain as they are, residents will be corralled at the road ingress and egress point by lorries and at the walking and cycling one by an unusable path. The Parish Council reasonably asks how is this acceptable for any long-term project however laudable the outcomes.

19. The Parish Council has proposed to the EA that:

- The diversion as planned is used but the new section of path is raised above flood plain, and made hard standing ensuring that the footpath is no less accessible than the current Devil's Backbone footpath.
- As the planned diversion butts up to an electricity substation, the EA and Parish Council receive and act upon advice on the mitigation of any risk that this possesses.

### **Communication and the Community Infrastructure Levy**

20. This project has already started for the residents of South Hinksey. The exploratory archaeological work in the surrounding fields was undertaken by contractors appointed by the EA. From a residents point of view, these works were poorly managed by the EA with their contractor showing little apparent regard for the environment around our houses, leaving the site without making good the damage caused.

21. In addition, there has been no recognition within the allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy of the effects of the delivery of this development on South Hinksey Parish and its residents. This is hard to understand given other allocations.

22. The Parish Council has proposed to the EA that:

- A works steering group is formed consisting of at least the EA most senior project manager, the contractor most senior project manager, the senior clerk of works, a representative of South Hinksey Parish Council, a resident of South Hinksey Village (not a parish councillor), one of the District Ward Councillors and the Ward County Councillor.

- This group meets at least monthly to discuss the progress of works and next phases and to discuss and agree solutions to issues as they arise.
- Direct access is given on an ongoing basis to the Chair of the Parish Council (or his/her representative) to the senior project managers for issues that cannot wait until the next meeting.
- A communication document is provided by the EA and contactor to all residents of South Hinksey at least monthly addressing the progress of works, the next phases and importantly the solutions agreed to issues raised.
- The EA provide a grant to South Hinksey Parish Council to provide for the additional administrative time required and not reasonably precepted for. In addition
- That South Hinksey receive a proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy to compensate for the major effects of this development.

23. South Hinksey Parish Council thanks the Planning Committee for their consideration of our reasonable comments and hopes that you find them reasonable and constructively made and are able to support us through mitigation measures and conditions.