

JOINT FORMAL HEARING
TRANSPORTATION MATTERS
WITNEY

REPORT ON TRAFFIC ISSUES
BY
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DECEMBER 2004

1. PREAMBLE

1.1 I assisted the lead Inspector, Mr John Mattocks, with a Joint Formal Hearing (JFH) at the Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney on the 28th, 29th October and 11th November 2004 to hear objections to the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.

1.2 The hearing was held to consider objections in respect of various highway proposals in the plan and omissions therefrom. The hearing was also to consider the implications for the highway network of objections seeking the allocation in the plan of sites for housing development in North and East Witney, as separate alternatives to an allocation at North Curbridge to the west of the town.

1.3 I carried out a number of site visits before, during and immediately after the hearing. Some of these visits were in the company of the lead Inspector and some were unaccompanied.

1.4 The report focuses on the interpretation of the traffic model outputs and comparisons between alternative/different options on that basis. I have not addressed such matters as sustainability or deliverability.

1.5 The report sets out a précis of the reporting brief, the plan proposals and the alternatives set out by the objectors. It appraises the technical evidence, including an assessment of the ‘do nothing’ situation. Conclusions are drawn from the evidence and include a comparative assessment of the various schemes.

2. THE BRIEF

2.1 The brief for my report was set out as follows.

2.2 The report should provide an appraisal of the highways technical evidence presented to the Inquiry; the reliability and robustness of the various assumptions made. In particular it should examine the conclusions as to traffic flows on Bridge Street and within the town centre conservation area derived from both the Arup and Babtie studies (explaining the differences between them) under the various ‘scenarios’ presented and as set out below.

2.3 ‘Do nothing’: Traffic growth without any highway improvements or development beyond existing commitments in the Local Plan ‘design’ year (2011).

2.4 Plan Strategy (assuming development in place at year 2011): Development at North Curbridge with A40 Downs Rd junction, Cogges Link Road (CLR) and West End Link (WEL). Comparisons (i) with CLR but not WEL and (ii) without either CLR or WEL.

2.5 E. Witney option (‘design’ year as for the Plan Strategy tests): Development without CLR but with Shores Green west-facing slips (SGW) in place; with and without WEL; if possible, with and without the Downs Rd junction.

2.6 N. Witney option (‘design’ year as for the Plan Strategy tests): WEL with Northern Distributor Road (NDR) in place; in isolation or in combination with either the CLR or SGW.

2.7 The report should also advise:

- to what extent a link road at Newlands (NLR) would provide greater or lesser benefit in traffic terms than either the CLR or WEL in isolation or in combination with SGW,
- the implications of the various road and development options for traffic flows/congestion on Station Lane and
- on any other matters relevant to the consideration of the duly-made objections.

3 THE LOCAL PLAN PROPOSALS

3.1 The proposals for Witney over the plan period should be viewed in the light of the local plan Transport Objectives for the town¹, which supplement district-wide objectives for transport and movement and which state:

- to introduce measures to minimise the impact of traffic on the town.
- to secure a network of roads which provide for satisfactory and safe circulation of traffic within the town with effective links to the primary road network but which minimises any detrimental effect on the character and amenities of Witney.
- to reduce and/or slow traffic flows in environmentally sensitive parts of the town, particularly the town centre.

3.2 In so far as it relates to Witney, policy T4 is the general plan policy of most direct relevance to the subject of the hearing and this report. This policy safeguards land for the construction of named major highway schemes, as identified in the County Council’s Local Transport Plan (LTP). Specific highway proposals are included in Witney Proposals 10 and 11. Witney Proposal 12 sets out traffic management measures for the town centre. Witney Proposal 6, for the North Curbridge Development Area, also incorporates the new A40 junction at Downs Road, with park and ride facilities of an appropriate scale linked to the public transport network.

3.3 In summary the LP transport strategy for Witney may be set out as follows. To ensure effective links to the primary road network, to minimise traffic impact and in particular to protect the sensitive town centre.

¹ LP Chapter 9, following paragraph 4.2

3.4 To meet these aims the following strategy is proposed:

- Provision of a junction between A40 and Downs Road, to the west of the town.
- Completion of the NEDR.
- Construction of the CLR.
- Completion of the WEL(1).
- Implementation of town centre traffic management.
- Construction of WEL(2), if justified.²

Local Transport Plan

3.5 The proposals should also be viewed against the objectives for Witney as set out in the OCC Local Transport Plan³(LTP). These objectives include the following:

- Reduce the adverse impact of motorised traffic within the town as a whole and particularly the most sensitive parts of the Conservation Area
- Protect and enhance the vitality and attractiveness of the town centre.

Area of Concern

3.6 There was some debate in the Hearing regarding the most appropriate area of the town centre which should be used to test the impact of the transport and development proposals.

3.7 The Local Plan talks about “*..environmentally sensitive parts of the town, particularly the town centre*”; the Local Transport Plan refers to “*..particularly the most sensitive parts of the Conservation Area..*” and “*..Protect....attractiveness of the town centre*”

3.8 During the Hearing we also heard that Bridge Street was considered to be the crucial area, in terms of town centre traffic impact.

3.9 In my view the four areas covered by in the Conservation Area Cordon Analysis⁴ (Bridge Street, Staple Hall junction, the Core Area and the Conservation Area) cover all the above policy aspirations adequately for the purpose of this comparative analysis.

4 THE OBJECTORS’ ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

East Witney Land Consortium

4.1 This objector also seeks deletion of the North Curbridge residential proposal and its substitution by a similar sized residential development to the east of the town, on land lying to the south of B4022 in the Cogges Hill/Cogges areas.

² Draft Local Plan, Chapter 9, paragraph 4.9

³ OCC Local Transport Plan, Part 3 Section 29

⁴ CD3/42 Conservation Area Cordon Traffic Analysis, - Annex 4

4.2 The objector would provide west-facing slip roads at the A40 Shores Green junction (SGW), making it an all-movements interchange. The objector also seeks deletion of the CLR.

4.3 EWLC maintain that the NLR would be the optimum scheme in combination with SGW, which they contend would significantly out-perform the CLR in traffic terms.

North Witney Consortium

4.4 The NW Consortium proposes a residential development of comparable size to, and as an alternative to, the North Curbridge proposal set out in the draft Local Plan. This development would lie to the north of the town, between Woodstock Road (A4095) in the east and Hailey Road (B4022) to the west. New Yatt Road would pass through the development area.

4.5 A northern distributor road (NDR) would skirt the northern edge of the proposed development linking these radial routes and forming a link to the NEDR, which will skirt the eastern edge of the adjacent NEDA.

4.6 The objector would provide the WEL(2) as part of his proposals and would seek deletion of the CLR from the plan

5 TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Traffic Models

5.1 Assessment of the impact of making changes to the transport system and the impact of proposed development in Witney has drawn on two separate traffic models built for different purposes.

The Arup Model

5.2 The Witney Transport Evaluation Study (WTE)⁵ was carried out in order to present the transport evaluation of three different proposals for the residential expansion of Witney; North Witney, East Witney and North Curbridge. For the WTE Arup initially created a 1999-based Saturn model of Witney building upon earlier work in the 1990s by Wooton Jeffreys, who had developed a PM peak model using QVIEW software. No new origin-destination data was collected in developing the model, instead Arup used 1999 traffic count data and matrix estimation techniques. Furthermore, in the absence of other data the AM peak and Inter peak trip distributions were estimated by manipulating the PM peak trip matrix distribution.

5.3 The forecasting model matrix was developed for 2011 by extrapolation of the growth assumed between the 1996 and 2006 QVIEW model matrices.

5.4 The Arup model was reviewed in 2001 in the light of new town centre traffic data collection by OCC. This led to the building of a new 2001-based model. The

⁵ CD1/50 The Witney Transport Evaluation, OCC/WODC, Final Report – Revised June 2002, Arup

forecasting model matrices were updated to 2011, as before, using previously assumed growth.

5.5 In the Arup model it was assumed that the following schemes would be implemented by 2011:

- NEDR (Jubilee Way)
- CLR
- WEL(1)
- A40 Downs Rd junction (east-facing slips)
- A notional package of traffic management

This was Arup’s 2011 base scenario.

5.6 In the WTE study Arup carried out model tests of North Curbridge with 827 dwellings, of North Witney with 898 dwellings and of East Witney with 827 dwellings. Tests were also carried out for 500 dwellings at each site.

5.7 For all trips except those generated at the housing developments it was assumed that the mode split in any forecast year would be identical to that in 1990 when the roadside interview was carried out.

The Babtie Model

5.8 This is the most recent of the Witney traffic models, having been developed by Babtie in 2003 following their appointment by OCC to carry out the CLR EIA.

5.9 Babtie carried out a limited amount of further data collection, involving a journey time survey. This data was compared with journey time forecasts from the Arup 2001 model and led to some minor modifications to Babtie’s coding of the 2001 network. The Arup trip matrix was not changed.

5.10 Babtie developed a new forecasting model for two forecast years, 2007 and 2017, covering both AM and PM peak periods. Whilst the forecast matrices were developed using information from the 2001 census, Babtie used the same trip rates as Arup in respect of the additional trips generated by the proposed housing developments and assumed that 800 new residential units would be developed at North Curbridge between 2008 and 2017.

5.11 In the Babtie model it was assumed that the following schemes would be implemented by 2007:

- NEDR (Jubilee Way)
- WEL(1)
- A40 Downs Rd junction (east-facing slips)
- Traffic calming on Woodstock Road and Woodgreen Hill

The network in this 2007 base scenario differed from that in Arup’s in the following ways:

- CLR was omitted
- Traffic signals at Bridge Street and pedestrianisation of High Street/Market Square were omitted from the notional package of traffic management measures modelled by Arup. In other words Babtie modelled a lesser set of traffic management measures in their EIA for CLR.

Inspector’s Conclusions on the Traffic Models

5.12 The Brief calls for an appraisal of the technical evidence and the reliability and robustness of assumptions made. In this section I am concerned solely with the applicability of the traffic models, and their outputs, to the considerations before the JFH.

5.13 Before embarking on a comparative assessment of the various development and infrastructure scenarios before the JFH, I consider that it is appropriate to highlight a number of concerns about the traffic models that have been used as the basis for the assessments presented to the JFH.

5.14 It is unfortunate that any such assessment must rely on two separate and different traffic models, built for different purposes, with different forecast years and different base infrastructure assumptions regarding town centre traffic management. This limits effective comparisons and is particularly unhelpful in consideration of forecast conditions in the Local Plan ‘design’ year of 2011, when the Babtie model addresses forecast years of 2007 and 2017.

5.15 I also have some reservations regarding the absolute validity of the models. They are based on old data; there have been no recent origin/destination surveys and the PM peak validation is poor; “*just about acceptable*” in the words of the WODC/OCC traffic witness.

5.16 The diagrammatic output from the models⁶ must be treated with caution; the use of two separate lines of different width to indicate ‘Greater than 10%’ or ‘Greater than 30%’ increases (or decreases) may hide small actual differences (e.g. a 29% increase would be represented by a narrow line, whereas a 31% increase would be represented by a broad line). Furthermore %age increases of small base traffic flows may be high but the actual flows may still be small, the diagrammatic output format would tend to mask this. For these reasons I consider that the output is rather coarse. The comparative analysis table at Annex 4 of CD3/42⁷ is a more helpful tool to assist in the assessment of various infrastructure alternatives.

5.17 The models must therefore be used with caution. In my view their value is limited and they should not be used for the absolute justification of any individual scheme.

5.18 However that is not the purpose of the present exercise. The above limitations apply in a similar way for each scheme and thus are of less significance where a comparative exercise is being carried out. The models may be used, separately, as tools for comparison, bearing in mind the caveats I have outlined above.

5.19 It became clear and was generally accepted during the Hearing that the more recently developed Babtie model is the more robust, reliable and relevant traffic model.

⁶ see the Figures appended to Mr Gilliam’s evidence and to OCC Doc 2

⁷ Witney Cogges Link Road, Report by the Head of Transport, OCC, to Executive, 6 July 2004

5.20 However the Arup model was built specifically to assess the impact of the various proposed residential developments at the Local Plan ‘design’ year of 2011 and much of the comparison of the impact of these proposals must therefore rely on this model.

6 THE ‘DO NOTHING’ SITUATION

6.1 No model run reflected the ‘do nothing’ situation in the 2011 design year, with no new infrastructure or development beyond that committed in the current plan.

6.2 This assessment therefore considers the traffic position in the base year of 2007 with no development beyond existing commitments and with the following highway schemes implemented:

- NEDR
- WEL(1)
- A40 Downs Road junction (east-facing slips)
- Traffic calming on Woodstock Road and Woodgreen Hill

6.3 Figures 1a and 1b of the WODC/OCC traffic evidence to the JFH⁸ show the forecast traffic flows in the Arup 2001 base scenario in the AM and PM peak periods. These reproduce the general features of traffic flow in and around Witney. In particular the greatest traffic flows are along Woodgreen/Woodstock Road, Bridge Street, Burford Road, High Street, Witan Way, Welch Way, Curbridge Road, Station Lane, Thorney Leys and Newland/Oxford Hill.

6.4 Figures 2a and 2b show the forecast traffic flows in the Babtie 2007 base scenario in the AM and PM peak periods. When compared to Figures 1a and 1b they confirm that the model forecasts a general increase in traffic along most of the roads that were already heavily trafficked in 2001, even with the schemes set out in 6.2 in place. Town centre delays and congestion would worsen.

6.5 Figures 3a and 3b, which compare the Babtie 2007 base with the Arup 2001 base, confirm that most roads in Witney are forecast to experience increases in traffic between 2001 and 2007. However, traffic reductions are forecast on some roads. Some of these arise from the impacts of the road schemes listed in 6.2 above. Others result from traffic adopting convoluted routes to avoid the congestion around Bridge Street, by using the alternative river crossings on the A40 or on Dry Lane in Crawley.

Inspector’s Conclusions

6.6 It seems clear that by 2007, and with the identified limited infrastructure improvements in place, town centre delays and congestion would worsen.

6.7 The main transport problems facing Witney, as identified in the draft Local Plan⁹ would remain and generally would have been exacerbated.

⁸ Mr Gilliam’s evidence to the JFH

⁹ Draft Local Plan, Chapter 9, Section 4.1

7 LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY

7.1 The development and infrastructure proposals tested are those set out in the Witney Chapter of the draft Local Plan¹⁰ and highlighted above in Section 3.

7.2 The Arup 2011 base largely reflects the Local Plan strategy in terms of infrastructure provision and may be used as a reasonable basis for comparison purposes. The WEL is modelled only as Stage 1 (WEL(1)). This reflects the WODC/OCC ‘wait and see’ strategy as outlined at the Hearing and set out in the draft Local Plan¹¹.

7.3 The forecast impact of adding 827 dwellings at North Curbridge (NC) on the 2011 base situation may be seen by reference to Figures 11a and 11b.

7.4 In the AM peak, the main traffic increase over the 2011 base (>30%) arising from North Curbridge would be along the east-facing slip road on to the A40 eastbound at the Downs Road junction. Lesser increases (>10%) are forecast along part of Deer Park Road, part of Thorney Leys, and along Church View Road/Southlawn/ part of Ducklington Lane.

7.5 In the PM peak, the only forecast increase would be on the off-slip road (east-facing) at the Downs Road junction with the A40.

7.6 In considering the option where North Curbridge were developed without the CLR, and without town centre traffic management, Figures 15a and 15b indicate that the network would perform similarly to that set out above but with slightly more extensive increases in traffic around the north east of the town.

7.7 The model indicates that the addition of the housing development would have no significant effect on town centre roads.

7.8 No model run was available to test the scenario where North Curbridge would be developed with both CLR and WEL(2) in place.

Inspector’s Conclusions

7.9 The main conclusion that may be drawn is that the development of the proposed North Curbridge residential area would have very limited impact on the critical town centre roads, including Bridge Street, compared with the 2011 base situation. This conclusion stands with both the base 2011 Local Plan network and without the provision of the CLR. Although in this latter case the roads around the north east of the town centre would experience increases in traffic.

¹⁰ Draft Local Plan, Chapter 9, Witney

¹¹ Draft Local Plan, Chapter 9, Witney, paragraph 4.9

8 THE EAST WITNEY ALTERNATIVE

8.1 The development proposals put forward by this objector (EWLC) comprise a replacement for the North Curbridge residential allocation in the draft Local Plan, of similar scale to that proposed.

8.2 The access strategy promoted as part of the EWLC objection includes the construction of SGW and support for the provision of WEL by completion of WEL(2).

8.3 Only a very limited number of model runs were carried out that included consideration of the network’s performance with the EWLC’s residential allocation in place. This limits the appraisal that could be effected compared with that required by the Brief.

8.4 One set of tests considered the implications of adding the EWLC residential development to the Local Plan infrastructure 2011 base, which of course includes the CLR¹². These forecast no significant impact over the base year situation in the sensitive parts of the town centre.

8.5 The addition of SGW to this scenario (i.e. still retaining CLR) indicates significant reductions in traffic that would use the CLR, particularly in the PM peak and again with very limited impact on the town centre¹³.

8.6 The effect of removing the CLR from these tests may be seen in Figures 16a and 16b. However this test does not include the SGW infrastructure. It indicates that the proposals would lead to noticeable increases in traffic on the NDR, Oxford Hill and to the north east of the town centre. Again the town centre would be largely unaffected compared with the base situation.

8.7 An indication of the effectiveness of the EWLC transport infrastructure proposals may be gained from CD3/42¹⁴. In comparative tests that do not include the proposed residential development, the combination of SGW and WEL(2) performs well [CD3/42, Annex 4]. It would provide significant reductions in traffic (total AM & PM peak) on Bridge Street (45%), through Staple Hall junction (40.4%), in the ‘core’ central area (18%) and in the Conservation Area (13.7%). These would represent an aggregate total reduction in traffic over all these sensitive town centre areas of some 23.8%.

8.8 However the provision of SGW alone, without WEL(2) would provide significantly less relief in these critical town centre areas; the comparative traffic reductions being respectively 15.7%, 13.7%, 13.5% and 13.2% with an overall total reduction of some 13.7%.

¹² Figures 12a/b of Mr Gilliam’s evidence

¹³ OCC Doc 2, Witney Transport Evaluation, Additional Model Runs, Figures 3 & 4 (OCC/Arup, August 2004)

¹⁴ Witney Cogges Link Road, Report by the Head of Transport to Executive, 6 July 2004

8.9 A further benefit that would arise from the provision of SGW in tandem with the EWLC residential development would be the reductions in traffic flow on Station Road and in the vicinity of the Ducklington interchange¹⁵.

Inspector’s Conclusions

8.10 The provision of SGW (and the A40 Downs Road junction east-facing slips) clearly would fulfil some of the roles of the CLR as indicated by the forecast significant reduction in flows on CLR with SGW in place[8.5].

8.11 As part of a highways package, including WEL(2) but without CLR, SGW would significantly reduce traffic in all the key town centre areas [8.7].

8.12 However, without the associated provision of WEL(2), it would have limited impact on traffic travelling into or across Witney town centre or the River Windrush [8.8].

8.13 Reductions in traffic in the Station Road area are not part of the Local Plan objectives. Furthermore Station Road is part of the town’s distributor road network and in my view would be an appropriate road to absorb increased flows [8.9].

9. THE NORTH WITNEY ALTERNATIVE

9.1 The NWC proposals include comparable-sized replacement residential development in lieu of the North Curbridge residential allocation. This replacement development would be situated on the northern edge of the town, to the west of the committed North East development area.

9.2 The access strategy for this proposal includes the provision of the NDR and WEL(2). The proposal does not rely on or support provision of the CLR.

9.3 The impact of the addition of the NWC residential proposals and NDR to the 2011 base (Figures 13a and 13b) is limited to the representation of the increase in flow (i.e. new flow) on the NDR, as a new route, together with some increases on limited lengths of adjoining routes. No noticeable impact is forecast in the town centre.

9.4 The addition of WEL(2) to this scenario (Figures 14a and 14b) forecasts significant increases on Hailey Road and Mill Street/Burford Road as traffic to and from development in the north and north east of the town is attracted to this new river crossing. Increases on Woodstock Road and New Yatt Road (AM peak) are balanced by reductions on Bridge Street. There would be significant reductions in traffic on CLR, NEDR and Newland (B4022).

9.5 The effect of adding the North Witney development to the 2011 base but without CLR or traffic management and with no WEL(2), is demonstrated on Figures 17a and 17b. There would be no noticeable impact on town centre roads. However

¹⁵ see OCC Doc 2, Figures 3&4

there would be significant increases on roads to the north east of the town; noticeably the NEDR and, of course, the new NDR.

9.6 The addition of WEL(2) to this scenario (Figures 18a and 18b) highlights the attraction of this new river crossing with significant increases on the feeder routes on the fringe of the town centre, including Hailey Road, Moor Avenue, Welch Way and Burford Road. Some reduction is noted on Bridge Street and Mill Street particularly in the PM peak. With no traffic management in this test Farmers Close shows a consequent significant traffic increase in the PM peak.

9.7 Further appropriate tests, based on the Babtie model with a 2007 base, are reported at Figures 23a/b and 25a/b. Figures 25a and 25b illustrate similar tests to those set out in Figures 14a/b and reported in paragraph 9.4 above. The principal differences are the earlier base year and different traffic management proposals. These 2007 (Babtie) tests give broadly similar results to the Arup tests but with marginally greater reductions on Bridge Street/Mill Street, reflecting the different traffic management assumptions.

9.8 Figures 23a and 23b illustrate the impact of removing the CLR from this scenario. These tests represent the infrastructure as proposed by the NWC as part of its objection. They show significant reduction on Bridge Street and other sensitive town centre roads to the south of Bridge Street and on Crawley Road. As reported above (paragraph 9.6) the influence of WEL(2) is noticeable with significant increases on the feeder routes to the north east and south west of the WEL(2).

9.9 No model runs were carried out to test the situation with NWC development and SGW in place.

Inspector’s Conclusions

9.10 The provision of the NWC residential development without WEL(2) but with CLR would have no noticeable impact on the town centre [9.3]. The addition of WEL(2) to this scenario would draw traffic on to its feeder routes on the periphery of the centre. It would relieve Bridge Street but would also significantly reduce traffic on key distributor routes such as CLR and NEDR [9.4].

9.11 The representation of infrastructure proposals as put forward to support the NWC development indicates that, without CLR, there would be significant reductions on Bridge Street and on other sensitive town centre roads, particularly with the traffic management proposals incorporated into the Babtie tests. Feeder routes to WEL(2) on the edge of centre demonstrate significant increases in traffic [9.6-9.8].

10 COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF SCHEMES

10.1 This section considers the traffic flow comparisons between the draft Local Plan proposals and those put forward by the objectors, EWLC and NWC. It also sets out the comparison between a proposed NLR and CLR or WEL(2) as required in the Brief.

10.2 The starting point is Annex 4 to the Conservation Area Cordon Traffic Analysis¹⁶ carried out by Babtie as part of the EIA of the CLR. This is a reasonable approach in that it analyses the impact of a wide variety of highway proposals upon the sensitive areas of the town centre as defined in policy aims in the draft Local Plan and in the LTP. It is these sensitive areas (Bridge Street, Staple Hall junction, the Core Area and the Conservation Area) that give rise to most concern in the community.

10.3 These analyses do not include the traffic generated by the three competing proposed residential areas. However, it has been demonstrated that the addition to the network of the respective housing proposals, in association with their corresponding infrastructure, would have little impact on these key town centre areas [7.8, 8.11, 9.11].

EWLC/NC

10.4 The first conclusion from Annex 4 is that the CLR plus WEL(2) marginally out-performs the SGW plus WEL(2) on the measure of total aggregated AM & PM peak changes (reductions) in traffic flow that would accrue as a result of the respective schemes. However the difference is only some 2.1% between the schemes.

10.5 If the WEL(2) scheme is removed from the equations, as suggested by the Council’s ‘wait and see’ policy, then the difference between the two increases to 3.8%, still in favour of the CLR.

10.6 A consideration of impact on a wider area than the sensitive town centre (e.g. the Station Road area), as suggested by EWLC, would shift the balance towards the SGW scheme. However no policy supports the requirement to relieve distributor roads such as this, in a non-town centre location. I therefore place little weight on this argument.

10.7 On traffic flow grounds I conclude that the CLR plus WEL(2) combination is to be preferred to the SGW plus WEL(2) option and likewise that CLR is to be preferred to the SGW, in terms of relieving traffic flow in the sensitive areas of the town centre.

10.8 These conclusions are not altered by the addition of the respective housing proposals with their corresponding infrastructure, i.e North Curbridge with CLR and EWLC with SGW.

¹⁶ Annex 4 to CD3/42

10.9 All the above conclusions assume that the A40 Downs Road east facing slips are in place. This highway element is a pre-requisite for both housing schemes.

NWC/NC

10.10 Essentially the NWC development would provide the WEL(2) instead of the CLR. The A40 Downs Road east-facing slips would be in place with either proposal. Annex 4¹⁷ indicates that, in isolation, the CLR would out-perform the WEL(2) by some 3.7%. (WEL(2) would provide 0.1% greater benefit than SGW).

10.11 In essence there would be little to choose between the scheme scenarios set out above, but the CLR would marginally out-perform the other options in terms of traffic relief to the town centre.

10.12 The NWC put forward evidence¹⁸ to illustrate the comparative impact of the North Witney development to that of North Curbridge for the ‘with’ and ‘without CLR’ scenarios. However in my view this must be treated with caution for the following reasons:

- The NWC option includes the WEL(2), the NC option does not,
- The tests focus on a more confined area of the town centre than the more appropriate comparative tests set out in Annex 4,
- The travel distance summary (Appendix 17B) masks the fact that different roads would exhibit different degrees of sensitivity; it would be more beneficial to divert around a longer distance route based on a distributor road (CLR) than through the town centre.

10.13 On traffic flow grounds I conclude that the CLR is to be preferred to the WEL(2). This conclusion is not altered by the addition of the respective housing development proposals in each case.

Newlands Link

10.14 The NLR is the lowest-ranked scheme in isolation in the analysis set out in Annex 4.

10.15 It would lead to an increase of traffic in the core area and conservation area and provide an overall traffic reduction, aggregated over all town centre areas, of some 7.5%. It would offer 10% less traffic reduction than the CLR and some 6.3% less than WEL(2).

10.16 I conclude that it should not be pursued as an alternative to the CLR or WEL(2) in traffic relief terms.

10.17 When NLR plus SGW is compared, in Annex 4, with the CLR scenario this combination is marginally out-performed by the CLR by some 1.5% overall greater traffic reduction. However it provides some 17.6% greater relief to Bridge Street and some 0.8% greater relief to Staple Hall junction.

¹⁷ CD3/42 Annex 4,- Conservation Area Cordon Traffic Analysis

¹⁸ Appendices 17A, B & C to Mr Eves’ evidence

11. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

11.1 I have some reservations regarding the absolute validity of the traffic models and their output and some concern over the use of two separate models. However, notwithstanding these concerns, I consider that the models may be used separately and with care as a tool to aid comparison of the various development and infrastructure proposals. The Babbie model is the more robust, but both are useable [5.12-5.20].

11.2 If nothing is done to improve the town’s transport infrastructure then, during the life of the draft Local Plan, Witney’s main transport problems would worsen [6.6-6.7].

11.3 When considering the Local Plan strategy I conclude that the North Curbridge residential development would have very limited impact on the sensitive town centre road network [7.8].

11.4 The infrastructure combination that would be provided as part of the East Witney residential alternative would fulfil some of the roles of the CLR. It would also significantly reduce traffic in the key town centre areas, providing WEL(2) was in place. In my view its contribution to traffic reduction on distributor roads away from the town centre should carry little weight in this comparative exercise, where the key policy objectives focus on the sensitive areas of the town centre [8.10-8.13].

11.5 The North Witney development infrastructure proposals would lead to significant traffic reductions on the sensitive town centre roads. Feeder routes to the WEL(2) on the edge of the town centre would experience significant increases in traffic [9.11].

11.6 The NLR does not perform well when measured against other highway proposals. I conclude that it should not be pursued as an alternative to the CLR or WEL(2), when considering solely traffic relief arguments [10.14-10.16]. Its combination with SGW brings it closer, in terms of overall relief, to the CLR scenario [10.17].

11.7 The overall comparison of the various highway scheme options leads me to conclude that the CLR is to be preferred to SGW and to WEL(2). However, in traffic flow terms, there is little to choose between the alternatives; CLR would out-perform WEL(2) by some 3.7% in traffic reduction, which in turn would out-perform SGW by some 0.1% [10.4-10.5, 10.10-10.11].

11.8 Furthermore a combination of CLR plus WEL(2) would out-perform SGW plus WEL(2) by some 2,1% [10.4].



ASSISTANT INSPECTOR

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