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Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Tyneside House
Skinnerburn Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7AR

Your Ref: NATTRAN/SE/HAO/291

26 February 2024

Dear Sir

Shores Green Slip Roads (SGSR) Public Inquiry

I write in relation to the above and with specific reference to the following:

- The Oxfordshire County Council (Highways Infrastructure – A40 Access to Witney Compulsory Purchase Order 2023)
- The Oxfordshire County Council (Highways Infrastructure – A40 Access to Witney) (Side Roads) Order 2023

I can confirm that West Oxfordshire District Council considers there to be a compelling case for both of these orders and a critical need for the scheme more generally.

Witney is West Oxfordshire's principal town and a key focus for growth under the current Local Plan.

Around 4,700 new homes are expected to come forward in the period up to 2031 including two strategic housing allocations of 450 homes and 1,400 homes to the east and north of the town respectively.

Growth of this scale will inevitably place considerable pressure on local infrastructure including the highway network.

Bridge Street in the central area of Witney currently provides the only vehicular crossing of the River Windrush, meaning it attracts significant volumes of daily traffic (around 20,000 vehicle movements each day).

This in turn creates air quality and pollution concerns which are exacerbated by the relatively narrow width of the carriageway and has led to the area being designated as one of only two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the District – the other being at Chipping Norton.

Bridge Street also offers a busy and noisy environment that is not at all conducive to walking and cycling, economic prosperity or good place-making.

The traffic congestion problems of Witney are fully recognised in the current West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 which seeks to secure a package of strategic transport upgrades including the provision of west facing slip roads at Shore's Green and associated improvements in the Bridge Street area.

The Local Plan highlights the importance of the Shores Green improvements in supporting the delivery of the East Witney Strategic Development Area (450 homes) but also the more general benefits that the scheme will have for traffic flow around the town, with those living in the east and north-east areas of Witney being able to access the town centre from the south by using the A40 instead of travelling along Oxford Hill and Bridge Street.

In summary, the District Council is wholly supportive of the Shores Green scheme which will:

- Provide greatly improved access to the A40, West Oxfordshire's principal road corridor;
- Significantly reduce the volume of traffic using Bridge Street and the surrounding road network in the town centre;
- Enable significant air quality and environmental improvements in the central core of the town; and
- Support delivery of the East Witney SDA (450 homes) the North Witney SDA (1,400 homes) and future housing growth at Witney more generally.

From a delivery perspective, I am also aware that the scheme now has planning permission and that funding is available through a combination of the developer contributions and the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

I therefore have significant concerns that if the scheme does not go ahead due to issues of land assembly, that it will have a hugely detrimental impact on the future prosperity and well-being of Witney and its residents and businesses.

I trust the above is helpful but do please let me know if you need any additional information or if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely



GILES HUGHES
Chief Executive