

**The Oxfordshire County Council (A40 Access to Witney)
Compulsory Purchase Order 2023**

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

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE:

DPI/U3100/23/25

**Summary Proof of evidence of
Philippe Mohan Nirmalendran
(Highways and Traffic)**

1 INTRODUCTION AND QUALIFICATIONS

- 1.1 I am Philippe Mohan Nirmalendran, serving as the Technical Director for the Streets and Roads Department at AECOM UK & Ireland, and I have accumulated nearly three years of experience in this specific role at AECOM. I hold a Bachelor of Engineering (Honors) degree in Civil Engineering with Architecture, and I possess several professional certifications, including being a Chartered Member of the Institute of Civil Engineers, a Chartered Member of the Institute of Highway and Transportation, a Fellow Member of the Institute of Highway Engineers, and a Chartered Manager accreditation by the Chartered Management Institute.
- 1.2 I have 20 years of experience in the highway engineering field, and I specialise in the design and project management of complex highway and traffic engineering road infrastructure projects taking designs from preliminary to detailed design, both in the UK and internationally. I lead a team of specialists, including engineers, traffic modellers and environmentalists, who provide essential design support and expertise whilst overseeing and coordinating project delivery.

2 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE OPTION ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 The Highways and Traffic Proof of Evidence that I have prepared details how the Access to Witney scheme underwent a thorough evaluation, following the Department for Transport's guidelines, to assess a number of potential options. The process involved a three-stage evaluation method, narrowing down from a long list of 33 options to a single preferred Option 2A-G.
- 2.2 The study, aligned with the Department for Transport's guidance, evaluated potential options for the Access to Witney scheme. The three-stage evaluation method aimed to identify feasible options for detailed assessment, design, and modelling, considering various criteria such as objectives, affordability, and safety. A TAG Options Appraisal Report considered a long list of 33 options in Stage 1, leading to a shortlist based on qualitative and quantitative assessments.
- 2.3 In Stage 2, the study assessed shortlisted options (2A, 2B, 2C, 17, 17a) using qualitative appraisal and DfT's EAST. A robust selection process aligned with DfT guidance ensured representation of the best options against the project objectives. Local issues helped identify potential showstoppers and refine options further. Option 2A, a grade-separated west-facing slip roads option, was preferred in Stage 2 and recommended for detailed assessment.
- 2.4 Stage 3 then focused on refining Option 2A, developing nine sub-options, and evaluating roundabout alternatives. Traffic modelling favoured Options 2A-E, 2A-F, and 2A-G for spare capacity. Sub-option 2A-G scored highest. Road safety, ecology, and public consultation reinforced Option 2A-G preference. Over 34 responses in the consultation slightly favoured sub-option 2A-G, contributing to its selection as the preferred option.

3 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE SCHEME DESIGN

- 3.1 The Highways and Traffic Proof of Evidence that I have prepared is to present also details the design process, guidance followed and design refinement of Option 2A-G (the Scheme) which includes signal-controlled T-junctions with Toucan Crossings at the A40 On-Slip and A40 Off-Slip. Despite minor departures from standards, approved by the Council's Highways and Transportation Director, the Scheme adheres to essential regulations. The proposed street lighting design features minimal lighting with LED luminaires, and the traffic signal design prioritises pedestrian and cycling movements. Landscaping plans focus on native elements to establish habitats, and a speed limit review suggests reducing the existing limit to enhance safety. Public rights of way modifications, VRS implementation, traffic sign changes, and minimal impacts on structures and pavements are also outlined, ensuring a comprehensive approach to the scheme's design and safety considerations. Collision analysis based on Oxfordshire County Council data further informs safety measures, emphasizing reduced severity with planned interventions.

- 3.2 My Proof of Evidence that I have prepared details the Scheme components of the slip roads design, B4022, and other critical elements such as shared use paths and footways, drainage, street lighting, vehicular restraints, traffic signals, pavement, landscaping, whilst detailing how the Option 2A-G preliminary design was informed by design standards, best practise guidance, surveys, speed limit review, Public Right of Way review, assessment of collisions and mitigation of departures, traffic modelling, assessments of existing lay-bys, geotechnical reviews, and work carried out through the New Roads and Streets Works Act in particular with Scottish and Southern Electricity and Southern Gas Network utilities companies.
- 3.3 In summary my Proof of Evidence that I have prepared details how the proposed Scheme (Option 2A-G) addresses significant traffic congestion issues on Bridge Street, Witney, a singular crossing point between east and west Witney. Recognizing the challenges faced by Witney and aligning with scheme objectives, the Scheme aims to enhance traffic flow, promote sustainable transport modes, mitigate the impact of traffic from proposed housing developments, improve air quality, and enhance accessibility for existing and future residential areas. Witney's congestion concerns are compounded by its designation as an Air Quality Management Area. The Scheme, supported by a Side Roads Order (SRO) under the Highways Act 1980, is crucial for meeting Oxfordshire County Council objectives and reducing congestion in Witney. The preferred Scheme design adheres to comprehensive design standards, considering local constraints, safety audits, pavement, drainage assessments, and environmental impacts.
- 3.4 The holistic approach of Option 2A-G includes west-facing slip roads, an improved cycle link, and a cycleway/footway, offering an alternative route for local traffic and demonstrating benefits in reducing congestion at Bridge Street. Public engagement and feedback have contributed to the design's acceptance, making it an efficient and effective solution for Witney and its surroundings. The chosen option, backed by assessments and traffic modelling, stands out as a design solution best aligned with the Scheme's objectives.

4 EXPLANATION OF THE SIDE ROADS ORDER (SRO)

- 4.1 My Proof of Evidence that I have prepared details the work planned for Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) whilst also detailing the Side Roads Order (SRO) which is proposed under Section 14 of the Highways Act 1980 for the A40 Principal Road improvement. The classified road works involve widening and other enhancements along the A40 from the A40 overbridge crossing of the B4022 at South Leigh, extending southwest for about 775 meters. This includes the construction of new slip roads, integral footways for pedestrians, and integral cycle tracks. The SRO, if confirmed, will authorize the stopping up of certain highways (footpaths) intersecting the A40 improvement works and other related highway works. This involves stopping up footpaths on both the north-west and south-east sides of the A40, with improved alternative routes provided through integral footways on the A40. The SRO aims to facilitate the delivery of the Scheme and ensure necessary highway improvements in conjunction with the planned A40 Principal Road enhancements. The Council asserts that these provisions are essential for the successful execution of the Scheme, and suitable alternative routes will be provided before the relevant highways are stopped up.

5 OBJECTIONS TO THE ORDERS

- 5.1 My Proof of Evidence that I have prepared also summarises the work undertaken so far and proposals for further work to discharge planning conditions in responses to concerns raised in Objections 2, 3 and 4 [CDs D.2, D.3 and D.4) that no mitigation drainage has been agreed.
- 5.2 My Proof of Evidence that I have prepared also response to concerns raised by Southern Gas Network PLC regarding the protection of their gas apparatus (Objection 1) [CD D.1]. AECOM has proactively collaborated with Southern Gas Network Plc. Through trial hole excavations and Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) surveys, the potential impact on the Southern Gas Network Plc apparatus has been identified. These assessments aimed to determine the

location and depths of the apparatus to ensure compliance with the minimum cover requirements between the apparatus and the proposed Scheme carriageway. Following excavations, it has been confirmed that the Southern Gas Network apparatus has sufficient depth, meeting the Scheme's minimum cover requirement. Further discussions will occur in the Detailed Design phase to finalize the Scheme's proposed levels and its interface with the Southern Gas Network apparatus through the New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA) process, ensuring compliance with Southern Gas Network requirements for asset protection. An Asset Protection Agreement (APA) is in place with Southern Gas Network to assure the asset owner that the method statement for delivery meets the requirements for protection of their asset. The terms of the APA were agreed between the Council and SGN on 12 February 2024 with SGN committing to removing their objection upon signature.

6 STATEMENT OF TRUTH AND DECLARATION

- 6.1 My statement of truth is contained in full within section 7 of my proof of evidence. I can confirm that the contents of that section apply equally to my summary proof of evidence.



Philippe Mohan Nirmalendran

20 February 2024