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Valley Park Didcot Amended Outline Planning Application – P14/V2873/O

Dear Ms. Bates,

Harwell Campus Bicycle Users Group (HarBUG) has commented on the previous outline planning for Valley Park Didcot and we would like to comment further on the amended application.

We are objecting to the outline planning application as we believe that there are aspects of the application, with relation to cycle infrastructure, that need to be developed and formalised. Given the scale of the development, cycling needs to be a key transport mode with good quality, continuous, convenient routes throughout and to Didcot, employment areas, schools etc. We object strongly to the design of the roundabout on the B4493 Didcot Road.

HarBUG welcomes the positive measures for cycling proposed within Valley Park. However, in the Design and Access Statement there are too many assumptions about cycle connections out from the development; on page 81 it is stated 'routes to the Town Centre via the existing cycle network will be developed to reduce use of private cars'. There is no existing cycle network. There are also several references to links to Great Western Park and Didcot, Great Western Park itself has suffered from having poor cycle links and routes out of the development. We need to learn the lessons from Great Western Park and ensure that cycle routes to key locations are identified and built at the very start of the development so that new residents have the option of cycling as soon as they move in. We do not believe that the development can be approved and go ahead until these issues are resolved.

In particular we would like to highlight the following:

1. We are pleased to see that a cycle route around the edge of the Northern neighbourhood connecting the A4130 to Cow Lane Bridge into Harwell village has been proposed. This is a strategic cycle route from Abingdon through Milton Park (via Backhill Tunnel) and Valley Park to the Harwell Campus. In addition this could form part of a long distance cycle route from Oxford to Newbury.
With this in mind we would like to ensure that this path is a good quality, all weather, all light conditions surface, suitable for short and longer distance commuting.



2. We would like to ensure that the Cow Lane Bridge across the A34 remains for cycle / pedestrian use only.
3. We welcome the inclusion of 'on line' cycle lanes along the primary roads. We would like to ensure that cycle lanes will have priority over traffic on all side roads, this is shown in the sketches on pages 59 to 61 of the Design and Access statement except for the junction at the local centre. We can see no reason why the local centre junction should not have the same priority for cyclists, this would ensure continuity and consistency of cycle infrastructure.
We would like the design to ensure the cycle lanes do not become additional car parking spaces. This will especially be a problem where the cycle lane runs parallel with the footpath, cars will park across both and block access for both cyclists and pedestrians. This may also occur where offline car parking is provided, cars may decide to park diagonally over the cycle lane to increase parking spaces.
There are many ways to stop this abuse of the cycle lanes; bollards, intermittent high kerbs and enforcement of parking by-laws.
4. We disagree with your statement on page 58 of the Design and Access Statement that the north south main street will be 'giving priority to motor vehicles and facilitating the free flowing movement of buses'. We believe that all vehicles, including cycles, using the north south main street need to be given equal priority.
5. As in the previous outline planning application, the A4130 roundabout providing access to the Science Bridge needs to have cycle crossings on the spurs to the north south Main Street and Science Bridge access road. These crossings should have protected central refuges to allow each side of the carriageway to be crossed separately. They should be designed so that they could be upgraded to signal controlled crossings, if needed in future.
6. The proposed five arm roundabout on the B4493 Didcot Road is a serious cause for concern. The B4493 is a main commuter cycle route to the Harwell Campus from Didcot and the proposed design takes no account of cycling. There has been recent investment to improve this route by upgrading the Winnaway in Harwell village, this has been undermined by the very poor design of the Great Western Park spine road junction and the cycle path along Wantage Road. The proposed roundabout design will further undermine the County Council's and Science Vale's stated goal of creating a premium cycle route to the Harwell Campus from Didcot Parkway.
We believe this is an opportunity to start to bring things 'back on track' by building a cycle friendly 'Dutch style' roundabout.



In conclusion, we re-iterate that although cycle provision within the development may have been addressed it is links and cycle routes to destinations outside of Valley Park that need to be identified and built at the earliest opportunity to ensure that cycling is a realistic transport choice. The planning application also needs to take into account the 'bigger picture' i.e. current and future cycle routes for Didcot and the Science Vale.

Yours sincerely

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