

HarBUG, Harwell Campus Bicycle Users Group, campaigns for better cycle facilities at the Harwell Campus and for better cycle infrastructure in the Science Vale area.

HarBUG welcomes the stated intention to provide high quality cycle paths along the road schemes detailed in the report. At this moment there is not enough information to provide detailed comments on the proposals. We hope the County will continue dialogue during the design stage and not present a 'take it or leave it' finished report.

Our comments on the plans published so far:

Scheme A: A4130 Capacity Improvements

The current A4130 shared use path is a flat, straight path interrupted only by the Great Western Park junction and the services along its length. The proposal will add two large roundabouts and, not shown on the scheme, an additional development close to Mendip Heights which will also require access to the A4130. All of these interventions will reduce the integrity of the existing path and make cycling a less attractive option.

The proposed capacity improvements should consider the design of the path and how cyclists are likely to use it along its whole length from Milton Interchange to Didcot Parkway. This path will be used by cyclists who want to get to their destination as fast as possible and do not want to give way to vehicles at every junction.

We want to see bold new cycle lane design beyond the minimum best practice and not 'doing the same thing we have always done'. We would like to see separated pedestrian and cycle paths both of which are 'buffered' from the main carriageway and from each other.

We are concerned that the newly opened Backhill Tunnel is not shown on the illustrative plan. It is important that a crossing point from the tunnel across the A4130 is included in plans.

With this section of the A4130 becoming an urban motorway we believe that surface crossing points will not be suitable and that underpasses around the roundabouts and across to Backhill Tunnel should be part of the proposals – similar to Kennington Roundabout?

Scheme B: Science Bridge

We would like to see the design include cycle ramps accessing the bridge directly from Milton Road and the A4130. This would avoid cyclists (and pedestrians) having to follow the embankments all the way down and going back on themselves. We would like to see separated pedestrian and cycle paths both of which are 'buffered' from the main carriageway and from each other.

What happens to the cycle path at the end of the Science Bridge route at the Hawksworth Roundabout? This roundabout is already very poor for cyclists trying to cross the relief road from Sustrans route 5 / Hanson Way. On this roundabout, better crossing and onward connections are needed.

Scheme C: Culham to Didcot River Crossing

It would be good to get a direct cycle route to Culham Science Centre from Didcot with a separate cycle path to the carriageway.

We disagree with the choice of alignment 1 as the best option. It is clear from the plans that alignment 1 should be reserved for future capacity expansion of the Didcot to Oxford railway section i.e. four tracks. Alignment 1 also has poor connections to Didcot for cyclists.

We think that alignment 3 is the best option, it connects directly with Culham Science Centre and the proposed Clifton Hampden bypass. It is also better connected to Didcot, the cycle path can be connected from the new Didcot North East development and existing Ladygrove development.

Alignment 1 and 2 are the worst for cyclists. There are no benefits of alignment 4 over alignment 3 and alignment 5 has no real benefits.

Scheme D: Clifton Hampden Bypass

There needs to be careful design of the A415 roundabout to allow cyclists safe and convenient access from all directions e.g. cyclists from Abingdon accessing Culham Science Centre – Dutch style roundabout?

What happens at the end of the bypass? The bypass will increase the speed of the traffic and the road is only classed as a B road. This could become a dangerous stretch of road to cycle on if improvements are not included in the proposals.

Overall Comments on the Proposals

We have commented on the plans as presented, as stated before there is not enough information to give a full feedback on the designs.

As a cycling group we promote active and sustainable travel as an alternative to the car. We question whether the proposals put forward which are all road schemes, result in the best transport solution for Didcot, Science Vale and Oxfordshire.

The proposals seem dated, the kind of transport policies which were popular in the late 20th century. The towns and cities across the UK that embraced these policies now regret it and are desperately trying to reverse the consequences of these decisions. An area that is marketing itself as a science and technology hotspot should have transport solutions to match this ambition.

We cannot see how these proposals fit with Oxfordshire's aim of reducing car use.

Conclusion

HarBUG objects to the road schemes proposed and we think the County Council should follow its own policies and re-evaluate transport for the Science Vale (a local rail / S-Bahn for Oxfordshire?) allowing real transport choices.

Whatever the shape of Didcot transport improvements, cycling must be an integral part of the proposals. HarBUG are keen to work with the County Council to make sure the best cycle infrastructure is built and works for all cyclists.