

Oxford to Cambridge expressway by stealth?

Road proposals linked to the controversial proposed housing development at Chalgrove airfield could pave the way for the Oxford to Cambridge expressway. These are among concerns raised by the POETS group of transport, environmental and planning experts.

The planned roads include bypasses of Abingdon, Clifton Hampden, Chislehampton/Stadhampton, conversion of the A415/A4074 (Golden Balls) junction to multi-level and “improvement” of the B4015 lane between Golden Balls and Chislehampton. (See plan attached).

Roger Williams, a member of POETS and a former chief transport planner for Oxfordshire County Council, said that these proposals introduce the possibility of a major road between the A34 at Abingdon and the M40 near Thame – in effect an outer Oxford Southern Bypass by stealth.

He added “This strategy has not been the subject of any public discussion, consultation or environmental impact assessment. County and District Council officers have not been forthcoming in responding to requests by members of POETS for information on these schemes and their costs. (A Freedom of Information request is currently lodged with the County Council).

“What is more, it seems entirely possible that these proposals, taken together, could be adopted as the route for the paused Oxford to Cambridge Expressway – a motorway standard road which has aroused almost universal public opposition. This certainly seems to be in the minds of whoever added the improvement of M40 junctions at Bicester to the list of possible highway measures. It’s hard to imagine that changes to a motorway junction more than 24 miles away would be necessary just to support development at Chalgrove!”

Noel Newson, another member of POETS, stated that the current proposals flew in the face of both central and local government recognition of a climate emergency, and the Secretary of State for Transport’s recent proposals for decarbonising transport. “These proposals, if built, would serve to increase dependence on car travel at a time when all levels of government claim that they want the opposite, and undermine the credibility of any climate change strategy.”

“Construction of these roads alone would cause huge damage. Add in all the traffic and development the road would bring and you would get a complete transformation of much of rural South Oxfordshire.”

POETS are concerned by the relative silence on these issues from MPs and councillors. “Why aren’t our local district and county councillors speaking up and consulting people? What is the point of the Oxfordshire Growth Board if it doesn’t explain this strategy and engage the electorate? And what about the Government’s public engagement into the development of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, which was promised more than a year ago?”

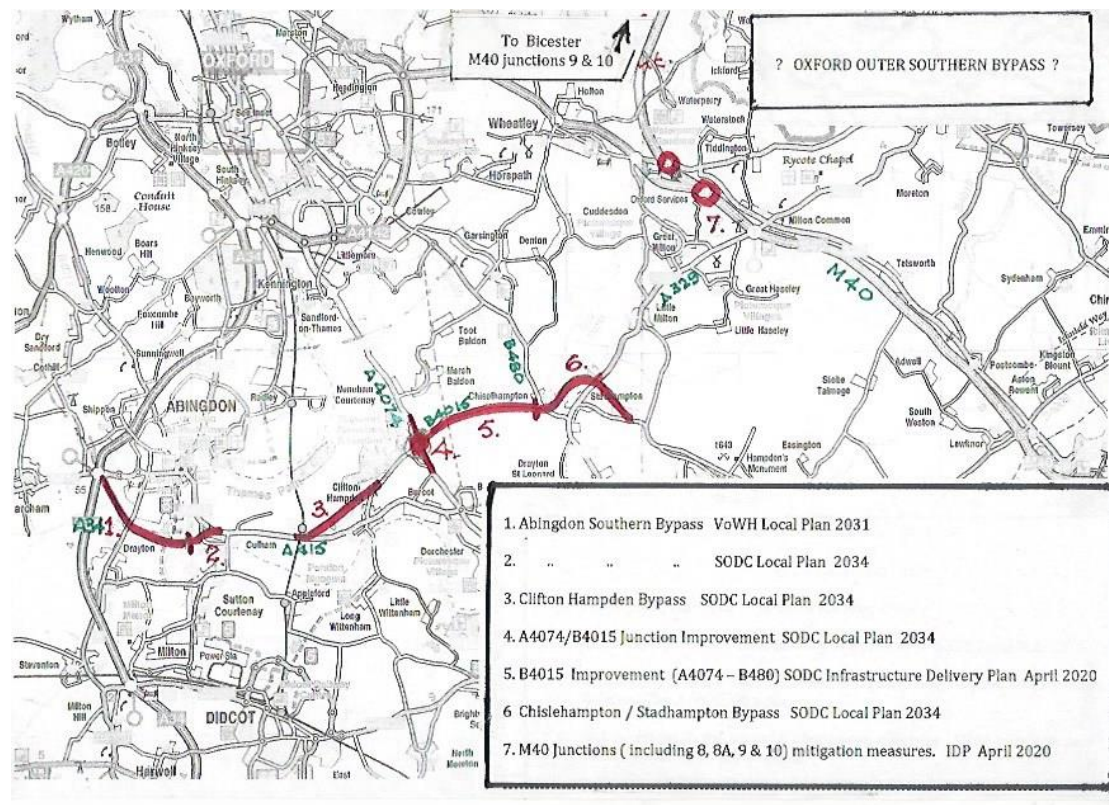
For further information contact:

Roger Williams 01844 238222
Noel Newson 01235 523370

contact.poets@gmail.com

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4 August 2020



For further information about POETS, including its membership, go to:

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