

Caroline Ford

From: Chate, Francois <francois.chate@stantec.com>
Sent: 30 June 2020 16:04
To: Bbosa, Rashid - Communities; White, Joy - Communities
Cc: Richard Cutler; Bruce Usher; Thorne, Neil; Caroline Ford
Subject: Bicester Gateway Phase 1b - Further transport considerations (20/00293/OUT)
Attachments: 46463-5501-001_B Proposed Site Access Junctions.pdf

Dear Joy and Rashid,

BICESTER GATEWAY

I am now able to set out our response to your request for an improved crossing at the western end of Charles Shouler Way (CSW). I trust this will enable you to withdraw your objection. In addition, the Bloombridge project team has now read the objections submitted by Albion, specifically the letter dated 19 June from Quod and the transportation note from David Tucker Associates dated 15 June. These objections appear to accept the need for further transportation works relating to Phase 2 but seek to put the delivery obligation onto our client's proposals (Phase 1b). We have therefore traced the issues back to source – which is a number of outstanding questions that we have previously raised with you, notably around the need for a comprehensive approach. This is covered under the second heading below.

Phase 1b and the Charles Shouler Way (CSW) crossing

Details around the design solution to be adopted for a pedestrian and cycle crossing across CSW at the A41 end of the road link remain to be agreed. The situation is as follows:

- The Phase 1b proposals offer to improve the existing informal crossing in the form of a more up-to-date informal crossing using the splitter island on CSW as a refuge. This is what I will refer to as the Phase 1b 'baseline' offer/improvements.
- OCC have asked that further improvements be provided by Phase 1b in the case of the Phase 1b development commencing in advance of the Phase 2 development. This is what I will refer to as the 'further' improvements. These further improvements could take the form of a parallel crossing or a traffic signal crossing to replace the baseline crossing proposed.

As part of our design work on the 'further' crossing improvements we have identified a number of issues that would apply to any crossing at that location (whether the existing crossing, the 'baseline' crossing or the 'further' improvement scheme).

We note that similar issues have been identified by Albion and Bicester BUG in relation to the 'baseline' improvement currently proposed, although we note that OCC did not raise similar concerns. Indeed, in your response dated 3rd June, OCC indicate that: *'Regarding the proposed crossing on Vendee Drive Link [i.e. the currently submitted 'baseline' crossing], we recognise the proposed improvement...'*

However, to adopt a consistent approach, improve deliverability, and address comments from objectors, we submit with this message a revised 'baseline' scheme that addresses the design challenges identified. This is to be considered as an alternative to the scheme presented in the Transport Assessment.

We trust that OCC will see this revised proposal as an improvement on the crossing layout initially offered. We can also confirm that this revised 'baseline' proposal does not affect the capacity of the CSW approach into the A41 Roundabout. It provides the same level of capacity as the existing layout on the ground. We have demonstrated through our Transport Assessment work that the proposed new Phase 1b development does not require any capacity enhancements out of CSW and this is accepted by OCC. This revised proposal has also been tracked to confirm that it allows for a large HGV to exit CSW.

I trust the attached is acceptable to OCC as a 'baseline' crossing scheme. If so, would you please confirm this to Cherwell so that your last remaining objection to Phase 1b can be removed.

Once this 'baseline' package is agreed as sufficient for the delivery of the Phase 1b development, it will remain for us to agree on the further improvements to be delivered in the event of the Phase 1b development being developed in

advance of Phase 2. We have reviewed a number of potential schemes and would like to suggest the following principles to be transcribed within the Phase 1b S106 agreement:

- In the event of the Phase 1b development commencing ahead of the Phase 2 development, Phase 1b would deliver:
 - o The proposed crossing on CSW as submitted here
 - o The pedestrian and cycle way along the A41 frontage of the Phase 1b development (combined to create a suitable route along the A41 connecting to the facility delivered by Phase 1a)
 - o A pedestrian route along Wendlebury Rd including: an informal crossing of CSW at the junction with Wendlebury Rd, an informal crossing of Wendlebury Rd north of the Phase 1a plot, a 2m wide footway on the eastern side of Wendlebury Rd along the Bicester Village frontage (to deliver an alternative route along Wendlebury Rd to Bicester)

We believe this is exactly in line with the request from the County, as discussed previously.

- In the event of the Phase 2 development commencing in advance of the Phase 1b development, the County has made it clear that they believe that the pedestrian and cycle improvements delivered with Phase 2 on Wendlebury Rd would form a highly attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists, which would therefore reduce the need for delivery along the A41. Taking this into account, in this scenario, Phase 1b would deliver:
 - o The proposed crossing of CSW as submitted here (to provide a connection to the site from the A41)

It is assumed here that Wendlebury Rd would form the better pedestrian and cycle connection for the Phase 1b development, when the Phase 2 improvements are delivered. This is exactly in line with the arguments put forward by the County across the two schemes.

We need your feedback on the above to progress further technical work. But, in the first instance, given we are looking at a 16 July 2020 Committee date, could you please confirm that what we have proposed is sufficient to inform the S106 and enable your last outstanding objection to be withdrawn.

A Comprehensive Approach to Phase 1b and Phase 2

Going back to the Albion response, we find these objections deeply worrying because they appear to accept my client's case that there are serious deficiencies with the Phase 2 application, but then put the responsibility and cost of these deficiencies on to Phase 1b to resolve. That cannot be reasonable, nor is it something that the Planning Committee contemplated on 21 May 2020, in our opinion.

Accordingly, Bloombridge's planning consultant, Maddox Associates, has written to Cherwell stating that the 21 May 2020 resolution needs to be reconsidered – on comprehensive development and transportation grounds. Clearly, Cherwell will defer to the County on transportation matters, so I have identified below our key areas of concern.

- **Traffic generation:** Bloombridge's position is that the Transport Assessment work carried out in support of the Phase 2 development and subsequently agreed by OCC underestimates the potential traffic impact of the Phase 2 development proposals. Previous representations submitted to CDC and OCC highlight a number of technical issues which have not been responded to or resolved.
- **Impact on CSW at A41 roundabout:** Bloombridge consider that there is an inconsistency in the way OCC have dealt with the Phase 1b extant consent and the Phase 2 application, to the detriment of Bloombridge:
 - o At the time of the Phase 1b extant consent being granted, OCC requested that Bloombridge widen the CSW approach into the roundabout. In simple terms, OCC considered that the impact of the c500 jobs to be created on Phase 1b would justify the need for an improvement (paragraphs 8.30 and 8.31 of the April 2017 Committee Report).
 - o OCC did not request the same improvements from Phase 2, despite Phase 2 representing 1,500 jobs, 3 times more, and the Phase 1b existing obligation being on a pre-commencement basis.
 - o The reason for this is that the assessment carried out by Phase 2 assumes the improvement agreed with the Phase 1b extant to be delivered. But it has not been delivered and the revised application for Phase 1b negates the need for the improvement, as agreed with OCC.
 - o Therefore:
 - § either the Phase 2 decision must make allowance for the need for the improvement to be delivered by Phase 2,
 - § or Phase 2 provides evidence that the improvement is not required (the Phase 2 TA does not assess the impact without the slip improvements in place, ie current conditions).

- **Phase 2 bus accessibility:** Bloombridge challenge the bus provision agreed by OCC in relation to the Phase 2 development proposals:
 - The Phase 2 bus provision includes a new southbound bus stop on Wendlebury Rd served by diverted local bus services in the AM and PM peak hours only. This limited provision only connects the Phase 2 development to Bicester at limited times of the day.
 - For Phase 2 employees travelling from other destinations, and in particular coming from the south (from core knowledge economy locations, such as Oxford and Science Vale), they will have to use services along the A41 stopping either at the P&R or at the stops on the A41 north of the Vendee Dr roundabout (the southbound stop and traffic signal controlled crossing across the A41 being provided by Bloombridge as part of the Phase 1a development). These stops are ideally placed to serve Phase 1 but outside the typical 400m walk catchment to bus stops from most of the Phase 2 development. This is an omission from the advice given to Cherwell and the Planning Committee.
 - Overall the level of bus provision agreed for Phase 2 is deficient and lacking. In short where is the Phase 2 bus provision for northbound buses?
 - OCC agreed on a £375,000 contribution to the deficient bus provision detailed above, but neither OCC or Phase 2 have provided any evidence of whether this £375,000 contribution will be sufficient to establish and sustain the peak only southbound only service to Phase 2 and how this contribution passes the Policy Bicester 10 and Regulation 122 tests
 - Therefore:
 - § There is a need for OCC to review the bus provision for the Phase 2 development, to increase the quality of provision and create a suitable environment to support public transport access to the Phase 2 site, to the benefit of sustainability, as envisaged by Local Plan Policy, which refers to 'maximising' and 'making the fullest possible use' of public transport. The performance of Phase 2 alongside these policy objectives is plainly something that has not been evidenced or explained to the Planning Committee, and therefore needs to be reconsidered.
 - § Bloombridge would argue that this issue needs to be dealt with in an holistic manner bringing together all developments on Bicester Gateway to deliver a better solution for the benefit of the entire site and local community.

- In conclusion, Bloombridge believes that:
 - The Phase 2 development should be considered again by the Planning Committee as there are gaps and omissions in the transportation evidence and information presented to the Committee by Phase 2 which should have had a bearing on the Committee decision on Phase 2.
 - Phase 2 and Phase 1b should be considered together and holistically so that the best outcome can be identified for the Bicester Gateway site and for Bicester, outcomes that can be delivered proportionally by Phase 2 and Phase 1b, with both developments working together. This would create a 'win-win'. At the moment, the disconnected approach to the planning decision process on the two developments means that Cherwell District Council, and Bicester risk inheriting a disjointed solution for the Bicester Gateway allocation site to the detriment of all (a lose-lose outcome). I do not see why Albion should not be party to the full costs and risks associated with the development of Phase 2.

I would be happy to talk this through. I should stress that my client was prepared to leave these points unanswered, but Albion's recent objections require that we now push for a comprehensive resolution. It cannot be right that Phase 1b picks up the costs and co-ordinating responsibilities, nor should Cherwell or the County be at risk in the event that Albion have underestimated the traffic impact and sustainable accessibility needs of Phase 2.

Kind regards

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