

APPENDIX 1 : ETPG: Emails from/to OCC Highways 2021 to 2023

22/9/21, Thank you for yesterday's meeting:

I just wanted to email to confirm with you, a couple of 'actions' you kindly said you would undertake:

- 1, To contact your Education colleague re any future change in catchment area for Gagle Brook School, and if there are any specific assumptions for it (e.g. all future pupils coming from NW Bicester masterplan area only).
- 2, To contact your colleagues in Transport Strategy, to see if they would be interested to meet with me regarding the model results vs reality in detail, and discrepancies in the results in the Transport Assessment for 21/01630/OUT (I am hopeful that they might consider the analysis I sent in documents, previously, as accurate enough to be worth investigating, and thus meeting with me would be helpful!).

3/11/12: reminder re above.

13/12/21, Cc'ing CDC Planning: reminder re above, plus:

Secondly - myself and several other Elmsbrook residents have been reading the updated Firethorn application's responses to your and our traffic impact comments from June, in VTP's Technical Note. We are actually somewhere between puzzled/shocked - at the claim that the points have been robustly assessed, when the key ones haven't, and there are new, clear errors - simple maths - in the latest analysis (e.g. in Attachment 7, in Part 3), which mean the conclusions are in error. We would be very grateful for your advice on how to proceed: should we simply raise our Objections, as per last time? - or perhaps contact Mark Kirby at VTP, to discuss things out with him now? Would that save any time/effort, or do these things have to play out in this way, anyway? (I'm happy to share my draft notes on this with you in advance, if that would be helpful to show you the points in question.)

13/12/21, OCC Highways reply:

I have not yet had time to check the maths in attachment 7, so I'd be grateful if you could point out the error.

13/12/21, ETPG reply back:

I would like to understand the truth, in both cases, because there are new anomalous results in the Attachment 7 data also (- e.g. the proposed new 207 homes using Charlotte Ave creating 17.6% of the traffic across the Charlotte Ave bridge, but the existing Elmsbrook - which is only the 71 Phase 2 homes using this bridge - creating 29-45% of the traffic - which is clearly nonsensical: 3x as many homes can't create ~half the traffic!).

The one point I was referring to, which you asked me to point out though, is even simpler. Table 3-3 uses a reference (details within Attachment 7) stating a limit for 4.1 m two-way roads of 804 cars per hour, to justify 636 cars per hour from the calculations. But it doesn't mention the bottlenecks - which is what we pointed out last time: the multiple bottlenecks on Charlotte and Braeburn are less than 4.1m, and have 2 rigid bollards each side within a half metre of the road. These designed "pinch points" create one-way flow at a time: I've never seen anyone try to pass there - it would be silly to attempt it, with modern car widths!! This renders each as a one-way flow, and since cars have to slow down to stop, and pass in turns, the limit per hour is probably well below 400 cars per hour, maybe much lower. (This could be proven by simple simulation.) (And this is before we get to other points, suggesting the 636 figure is way too low!) Without the bottlenecks item we raised being addressed, then the overall conclusion issue we raised isn't addressed either: the actual RFCs will be much higher than stated.

23/12/12: ETPG sent latest Objection points to OCC Highways, CDC Planning.

5/7/22: to OCC Highways Cc CDC Planning:

1. VTP's TNs not correct 2x one-way bottlenecks, they take much more traffic in the 8-9AM peak hour
2. OCC 23/6/22 reply considering the suggestion to widen the 4.1 m section: issue for bicycles and pedestrians. The same widening would also then be required at the park bottlenecks - which then removes the "safe" crossings into the park for kids using it; again going against the clear intention of the original design for safety of pedestrians and cyclists (especially younger ones).

3. Initial master plan: stretch of road between school and bus gate never meant to receive any additional traffic. A resident wrote last week stating: "It is extremely difficult to understand for a "non-Elmsbrook" person to how I(we) feel. I am seriously at breaking point. The whole situation is seriously affecting my day to day life."

4. The bridge north of the school would also need redevelopment, again increasing risk - to kids walking/cycling.

5. VTP's statement they can't use traffic surveys due to Covid lockdowns is no longer valid, & Mode survey in 9/21. Also the traffic monitoring data is available from Mode for the years up to March 2020. All these datasets show how significantly the VTP figures underestimate the true traffic levels. Why no requirement to assess using that data?

6. One figure has been updated since: the sudden reduction from 636 trips to 140 trips, for the 8-9AM peak hour, from TN006 to TN009 – but with no explanation of why/how. *Joy has answered – different method used.*

7. VTP state, again, that the original design "must have" been acceptable to OCC, when it was signed off in 2016, based on future scenarios for the Ecotown Masterplan. However, 14% of the total homes which would be accessed via Charlotte and Braeburn Avenues – if the Firethorn scheme were accepted as it stands – are located on a field which was never part of the Masterplan, and was "added on" ~2018-19. So their statement seems wrong.

That they keep stating it seems to be a pressure point they want to keep making, which reads very strangely to concerned residents. Many residents' discussions recently have actually voiced concerns about what pressures are present on OCC and/or CDC from the developers – since the community has had no dialogue since early days (which seemed to go very well!), and yet so few of the key issues residents have continually raised appear to be either in discussion or being addressed, particularly regarding traffic impacts overall and the zero carbon build aspects.

We would be very grateful indeed for any answers you can provide to the above, plus reassurances you can give that Firethorn will not be allowed to bring this application to Committee when it is still contradicting key development principles, proposing changes which would seriously adversely affect homeowners and the School, and there is still a clear lack of evidence to show that traffic impacts would not be 'severe', based on NPPF paras. 109-111.

I hope all this makes sense - I can only reiterate: we're not against the Firethorn development; we just want it to be 'truly eco' - and not mess up our roads with a future traffic nightmare, and danger to kids/cyclists/pedestrians!

5/7/22: to CDC Planning Cc' OCC Highways:

I note that while Firethorn/VTP submitted TNs 008/9, and OCC have Responded specifically to this, there's nothing else (e.g. re 'eco build' and the FVA) updates-wise, and no alteration to either the 'Comments Due Date' (or 'Target Decision Date') – residents have been asking me what happens next: will there be another stage of comments based on the above new docs? Residents are very concerned about the developer trying to use some kind of 'tactics' to be able to get the application to committee and win on appeal even if it is rejected?

1/9/22: to CDC Planning, Cc OCC Highways – sent further response, due to no information

We remain 'in the dark' as to how 21/01630/OUT is actually progressing: as we note in the attached, some of the most critical issues still seem entirely unresolved. A lot of residents remain variously very concerned, through to quite upset about what might happen, regarding traffic impacts and zero carbon build in particular. We would be very grateful for anything you and your teams can do, to update us and enable us to reassure folks.

9/9/22: CDC Planning reply, Cc OCC Highways:

Thank you for your email as below and my apologies for the delay in responding. It was not considered at our Planning Committee yesterday and it will not be on the agenda for the October meeting either. We are still working through some main outstanding issues including Transport (and a further objection was received yesterday which will be saved onto the file in due course), viability and some outstanding queries on other topics. At the moment, the application is progressing and relevant information will be published on the file as and when it can be.

There are a number of wider issues at NW Bicester which are requiring our attention (some related to the issues arising on the Firethorn site) and so we are more widely considering various issues and how we might address them but please be assured that we continue to give very careful attention to the various requirements at NW Bicester.

11/1/23: to CDC Planning Cc' OCC Highways:

I have just received the information that 21/01630/OUT is going to committee, next Thursday. I understand that OCC Highways have now removed all objections regarding the Traffic Impact Analysis – including therefore any such regarding the traffic impacts on the roads within Elmsbrook, I presume.

Can I please ask why no one seems to have addressed the critical points regarding the traffic impact analysis of Elmsbrook roads, which are supported by traffic survey information and mathematical analyses we have submitted to you, on multiple occasions – along with many other detailed objections from Elmsbrook residents, stating similar, in the “previous consultation rounds” from Firethorn?

I am very surprised this has gone to committee without answering these key things:

1. Omissions in what is presented/concluded in the final submission to the committee:

Many of these points are stated in section 6 of Part 8 of the Agenda Document for the committee meeting, which then states (page 54): “In assessing the proposal due regard has been given to local resident’s comments as material planning considerations.” However, while there is mention of some in the response in section 7, e.g. in 7.2, the OCC Highways response in 7.12 completely ignores this (and is only in reference to the A4095 mini-roundabout scheme, at the west edge of Bure Park. I believe all of it – up to and including the paragraph beginning “Therefore although the impact of the development may be felt for many years, it is likely to be temporary, if long-term temporary.” Refer only to that, and nothing to do with the Elmsbrook traffic impacts).

Furthermore, in the list of “key issues for consideration” in the Appraisal section 9.1, there is no mention of transport/traffic impacts! In 9.67, it refers to NPPF P. 111, “...development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.” In point 9.68, it states there’s no clear definition/guidance for what constitutes ‘severe’!! 9.96-9.93 then focus on the A4095 junction.

It's only 9.94 (on page 80) which discusses Charlotte Avenue on Elmsbrook – but only discusses the narrowing NORTH of the school – yet, as I wrote to you about previously – this ignores all our points about the bottlenecks SOUTH/EAST of the school – where the greater volume of traffic actually flows. (There are two here, each end of the bridge. Similarly on Braeburn. These are 4.00 m width, with bollards 0.50 m from the edge: they do not permit two way flow.) We believe these, by themselves, show the additional traffic flows would be disastrous.

Have these points been considered/checked?

2. Why is traffic survey data – essential as measuring reality not simulation – been ignored?

The transport assessment/traffic analysis documentation submitted still uses Covid as an excuse to have not undertaken a traffic survey on Elmsbrook, thus they claim using simulations only is justified. Yet there have been multiple surveys done, immediately prior to Covid, and since the ONS confirmed traffic levels had returned to normal, back in July 2021. Mode Transport did an official one day survey on Elmsbrook in September 2021 – and you will remember that I sent you copies of several other survey documents, and emailed you about the Mode survey – and I did the same with Mark Kirby at VTP. Why is this important data source still ignored? It provides a way to assess the accuracy of the simulation data.... (NB: and Mode concluded the ecotown traffic is meeting the eco targets.)

3. Why is the accuracy of key traffic figures not checked/analysed properly?

Firstly: have the figures in VTP’s TN documents been fully checked to confirm accuracy/validity? – especially the ones which we have presented evidence that they are contain errors (in Objections, and in my emails to you). Just to give one example, the figures in TN009 are inexplicably much lower than their predecessors with no explanation/justification – as I wrote to you about before (on 5/7/22).

Finally, even if you ignore their incongruity with measured traffic survey data, and accept the raw simulation output results, we understand that the most critical simulation data result relied upon here shows the best case RFC for the Charlotte Avenue road junction as being 0.87. We have pointed out that this exceeds 0.85, which you have used as a

“hard and fast limit” for decisions regarding the Graven Hill roundabout – so to allow this design to pass as it stands would be inconsistent with that decision making.

Furthermore, as previously pointed out, the true RFC will be significantly in excess of 0.87 – the whole road network will jam from school to B4100, between 0800-0900 and a bit after, if the design goes ahead as submitted. My understanding is that this, in itself, and coupled with the narrowings between there and the school – would constitute a ‘severe’ issue.

And there is ample data and evidence for this. By ignoring the traffic surveys completely in the documentation, alone, you are setting yourselves up for a Judicial Review – as we discussed in our video call about this, Joy, back on 15 September 2021 – you stated you would discuss the issue of ignoring this data with Caroline. Can I ask if you did? We agreed it would be much better to ensure the final application avoids the risk of this happening!

Conclusion:

If the answer is: "we checked, your maths and logic are wrong" – fine, great! – in which case, please show me so!!

If not – it appears strong evidence exists that the design goes against NPPF P. 110-111 – as our previous submissions to you explained.

Finally – as I keep saying! – we want the Ecotown to grow! – we want this build to happen, and ASAP! – but NOT at the expense of screwing up our road network for the entire future of the ecotown – when clearly there are relatively easy solutions – and we took the trouble to discuss this in our last submission to you! (Attached.)

11/1/23: OCC Highways reply copied from email to CDC Planning:

Re the narrowings southeast of the school at the bridge on Charlotte Ave: The developer carried out an assessment of the impact of development traffic on the Elmsbrook Spine Road (TN004 – submitted as an attachment to their Nov 21 submission), which included consideration of the bridge southeast of Gagle Brook School. It showed how alterations could be made to better cater for both two-way traffic and cyclists. Narrowings could be removed and replaced with speed tables (with suitable profiles for buses) and other traffic calming features. As it stands, the Elmsbrook Spine Road has not yet been adopted, so the developer would not be able to make these changes. However, the applicant has offered a contribution towards local road improvements, and although we have asked for clarification on what this includes, some could be put towards such works if they are found to be necessary, in consultation with the local community.

Mr Fellows has highlighted in particular the large difference in assumed trip generation for Gagle Brook School compared with surveys carried out by the local community. Gagle Brook is clearly attracting a significant proportion of pupils from outside Elmsbrook, who are being brought to school by car. It’s assumed that Gagle Brook will cater much more for pupils within NW Bicester as it builds out, so that by the time this development is built out and generating the predicted trips, the number of pupils being driven to school will be significantly lower.

Additionally, the assessment included consideration of traffic that would flow across the bridge from the adjacent (Hawkwell Farm) development, and it’s worth noting that the current proposals from Hawkwell Farm propose the road between their site and Elmsbrook as a bus only link, thereby significantly reducing predictions of car traffic over the bridge.

However, as you know, I have been concerned that the number of vehicles accessed from the access B (access to western parcel, south of the bus gate) should be kept to a minimum and have previously recommended a condition restricting the number of dwellings that can be accessed from B. Please could this be added to the list of conditions. TN007 suggests that this should be 67 dwellings. I would prefer it was fewer but there does need to be a restriction, otherwise many more than this might access this way. I have also previously suggested to the applicant that the eastern parcel or at least some of it, could be accessed directly from the B4100, which would be preferable to the use of access A, subject to the construction of a safe access, to minimise vehicle movements through Charlotte Avenue. However, the applicant’s proposal does not include this, and we have to consider whether the proposal in the application is acceptable, which I consider it is, subject to localised widening, which could be funded using the ‘local road improvements’ contribution offered. Again, the number of dwellings that can be accessed from access A

should be restricted by a condition. The calculations in TN007 assume 138 dwellings on the eastern parcel, and this should be set as an upper limit.

Regarding the use of local traffic surveys to validate the Bicester Transport Model (used for future year baseline traffic flows): the Bicester Transport Model reference cases have been found to be acceptable for use in modelling junction capacity for developments in the area. The model has been fully validated and validation reports are available if required. Therefore further validation using surveys commissioned by others is not considered necessary.

Regarding the accuracy of figures, Mr Fellows has pointed out a discrepancy between traffic flows on Charlotte Avenue predicted in TN004, para 4.4.9 and those predicted in TN007 Table 2.1. I had not pointed this out in my earlier responses, because in TN004 I had been more concerned with refuting the methodology of extrapolation of standards for carriageway widths. In TN007, the traffic flows for Charlotte Ave north of Gagle Brook School were estimated using the same approach as the original TA for trip generation, modal split and containment, which I found to be acceptable.

Regarding the point about the Ratio of Flow to Capacity (RFC) prediction for Charlotte Ave/B4100 junction being over 0.85 – it is not correct that this has been used as a hard and fast limit for decisions regarding Pioneer Roundabout at Graven Hill. This also included consideration of queueing and delay. (It's worth pointing out that the local congestion at narrowings is unlikely to affect the RFC at the Charlotte Ave/B4100 junction.) Nevertheless, the application acknowledges that there would be an adverse impact on this junction and the applicant has agreed to make a contribution towards its signalisation.

11/1/23: ETPG reply again to OCC Highways Cc CDC Planning:

I am really sorry, but your answers do not make sense: let me address each point in turn:

1. In your first paragraph: the developer only assessed the 4.1 m narrowing north of the school on the Spine Road, and suggested changes there. There is no addressing of all the bottlenecks for children to cross safely to the school, park and Forest School, either side of the school. And as I've pointed out, these are 1-way flow, not 2-way flow as the developer considers in all their simulation figures. If you were to remove all of these, it would be key a safety concern – but the key argument re RFC (See below) is actually unaffected based on levels alone (i.e. even assuming 2-way flow).
2. Re your second paragraph: irrespective of demographic and levels now, the future assumption that 'all kids will come on foot from within the ecotown' is invalid: the correct answer re long-term is to calculate using the original trip targets for the school – when you do that, you find the 8-9am trip levels will be slightly higher than they are now! (This is in one of the documents I sent you in September 2021, after our video call.) So your concluding statement – that the number of trips will be lower is Not Correct.
3. Re your third paragraph: I believe the Hawkwell proposal does not preclude making it a car link also; they are vague on this. Since the school extension will be both sides of that join, it seems highly unlikely that it would be bus only, when Hawkwell goes to detailed design stage. So I don't think the argument can be justified at all – it is actually more likely that the current model traffic from there will be significantly higher than the model used to create the figures in the TNs.
4. Re your fourth paragraph here: I agree with you! But: Why has the developer refused to go with a third (and fourth) entrance off the B4100? It's a simple solution to these key problems.
5. Re your 5th paragraph re local traffic surveys: I am not saying the model is invalid and the prior validation trials for it are wrong – I am saying that the Elmsbrook traffic surveys show the reason that the 60% targets are not being met by vehicle trips but are being met by petrol/diesel vehicle trips – because Elmsbrook has such a high percentage of electric vehicles: the traffic counts are around 90%. This is where the extra x1.5 comes from – it's not an error in the simulation model, it's an error in the level % entered as input. BioRegional have supported Mode Transport's conclusion to include electric vehicles, I understand, from the conclusions coming from the Sept. '21 survey.

But the evidence is there: there are that many vehicle trips on the roads, because the Ecotown has no convenience store, no other small shops, no pub, no GPs – i.e. no proper local centre – and the nearest local ones are beyond

walking distance for elderly residents and those with kids who can't cycle. And since Firethorn don't propose any of the above on their parcel, the same factor will also be true for their +207 homes' worth of vehicle trips.

6. Re your 6th paragraph: yes, but the reason the 140 trips figure is flawed is identical to the arguments above: the inputs are vastly underestimated. I sent you my calculation in a previous Objection response, showing the simple extrapolation from 140 trips, but scaling by the true flows from the traffic surveys. It is many times higher.

7. Re your final paragraph: I profusely apologise if the information passed on to me by (usually very reliable!) technical expert and lawyer from Bicester BUG, re 0.85 having been used recently as a hard limit, is not correct. But actually, this is also irrelevant: when you take into account the errors I have pointed out in the previous points, the true trip count is almost 4x the 359 predicted by the simulations which give the RFC = 0.87 result.

So, 4x the loading will give a true RFC much greater than 1.0 – I cannot see how the above logical, evidenced argumentation does not hold – i.e. that this conclusion is realistic, and the 0.87 is not – even if you modify the Charlotte Avenue bottlenecks. The school's target is incredibly low, very challenging – and I hope they will meet it – but I seriously doubt they will do better than it, which would be required for the true RFC to ever reduce below 1.0 – even if we get a convenience store, as promised years ago. There's no sign of a GP surgery, or any other shops. The ones proposed for Hawkwell are also too far away, people will be forced to drive (ideally all in the greenest cars possible!).

I am also attaching a slightly modified version of the PDF I sent before, which refines the diagrams slightly, and includes a further 'forgotten' point from our group's earlier responses: regarding the Braeburn Avenue results which are completely illogical - please see slides 12-14. We are very concerned about that junction, and the small feeder junctions from Lemograss and Blueberry – the risk of accidents (borne out by 2 accidents on the B4100 junction late last year, and many 'near misses' reported at Blueberry and Lemongrass). Please could you check and consider this also?

Would it be possible to speak by 'phone, to whomever has done the full technical assessments on all of this? We simply cannot believe that this can be supported, using these 2 junctions as proposed for all the new homes. An RFC >> 1.0 will be disastrous not just for the Ecotown, but also for the B4100 to J10, and the Ring Road.

Caroline – I hope you will consider my points above seriously, when you are thinking about what to present tomorrow: in terms of the true traffic impacts that will occur, by people acting in line with the environmental traffic modes as recommended, and in terms of the risk of danger to children crossing to parks/school/the forest school. This is the reality.

11/1/23: Another member of ETPG – making additional points in reply:

The Developer may well have made no proposal for permanent additional infrastructure access points onto the B4100 but it is obvious why that is given the arguments to ignore Bicester Eco Town Policies to save cost but Highways can and should require such additional infrastructure.

It seems to me the only argument that the developer has successfully made it to create further dwellings to meet the Master Plan targets.

The developer assumes incorrectly that they can use our privately owned MUGA, it is not a CDC or Bicester Town asset despite what Sports England may believe residents of Elmsbrook pay £ 150 k per year for the upkeep of our development including sports facilities and playgrounds, it is assumed also that the Developer can provide permeability onto private roads which are not up for adoption, they cannot for example access Wintergreen Fields and Caraway Fields. Consequently all foot and cycle traffic will also need to access Charlotte avenue and navigate the narrowing near Wintergreen Fields and the road bridge south of the school.

30/1/23: from CDC Planning:

I am currently working on updating the report to include those matters that were included within the written update with a view to reporting the application back to Committee on the 9th February 2023. As long as the final report is agreed, then the agenda papers will be published this Wednesday and notifications are usually sent out the day after. I need to focus on this today as the deadline is tight so I am afraid there won't be an opportunity to meet/consider significant further submissions in advance of the report being finalised now.

The recommendation is not changed other than to update it to incorporate the written updates from the last meeting. The Highway Authority do not object to the scheme and the points raised in the lead up to the last committee will be covered in the report. With regard to other matters, including that related to viability, hopefully you noted from the last report that Officers are seeking delegation to continuing negotiating because there are elements of this work that need further discussion in order for us to finalise a minimum level of infrastructure that can be secured. I'm sure that you have noted from the report that this is a very challenging area and Officers have worked hard to recommend a solution that is balanced taking into account all requirements.

I will add as I will include a note to this effect on the report, that the Council have received a 10 day prior notification that the applicant intends to appeal against the non-determination of this planning application which they would seek to follow the Public Inquiry procedure. This notification stated that the appeal would not be made before the 31 January 2023 and I cannot therefore advise whether such an appeal will be made. If the application were not reported to Committee on the 9th February 2023 then I would anticipate an appeal being lodged and the Council would no longer be the decision maker (and it is possible that even if it is on the agenda for that meeting, an appeal may still be lodged).

31/1/23: ETPG reply

It really doesn't assist - in terms of getting to a good solution – if nothing changes!

I'm really sorry, but you leave me no choice but to respond to the last set of responses – because in 4 key cases, the crux of the matter has still been missed: I feel like I'm repeating points I made years ago, and I'm really sorry because it's almost certainly my fault for not explaining well enough more recently – but this is why I wanted to meet with you both - because it's so difficult to cover multiple interlocking and complex points by text comms!

I will do so as concisely as I can... (sorry!!): if you have time to read, acknowledge, include the points, then great.

1, The “spine road assessment” in TN004 is not a full assessment: it misses the most crucial source of 1-way flow, which Joy and I discussed in our video call on 15/9/21, and the work-arounds proposed are not only rendered irrelevant by this – both of the designs are flawed.

No Elmsbrook road is wide enough such that, when cars park one side, 2-way flow is possible – only 1-way. Joy told me (on 15/9/21) that OCC's policy for School drop-off/collect is not to provide spaces – which is why Gagle Brook School on Elmsbrook has none: it is to ensure wide roads surround it, for parents to park. However, this is not what we have. I've shown you both the diagrams and photos of the situation, and I include these again below – please come for a breakfast meeting with me, at the Eco Business Centre, at 8.30, if you want to see for yourself! We have 28-30 cars doing this, now the school is over 100 pupils.

This is what it is. Therefore, it must be included in the modelling for Firethorn's proposals, as it reflects reality – we can't “wish it away.” We proposed E1 bus route changes 2 years ago, to reduce this, but OCC turned this down (A2 told us). So: either it needs to be understood that Charlotte Avenue is 1-way flow for a long length – or, a proper solution needs to be found, which could enable it to become 2-way flow from 08.15 to 08.45 again.

TN004's bridge measurements are wrong – please measure it yourselves, as I've done – the bridge is 10 metres, yes – but not the inside measurement between the walls! The design they submit, as specified, won't fit. I am also told by Bicester BUG that it doesn't satisfy requirements for cyclists and pedestrians, because of interruptions to the width elsewhere.

TN004's proposal to widen the 4.1m stretch to 4.8m is also flawed: the kerbside drain system is complex, and the tree root area is only 0.5m from the existing kerb, not 0.7m! We can't see how you would manage to drop the drains by 400mm and still make them work...

The concluding point here, however, has to be: by removing all the bottlenecks, you're removing the crossings for children to safely get to the parks, the School, and the Forest School site. If you were to ignore the 1-way flow issue, and the site goes ahead as-proposed, it goes against NPPF parag. 35, which states:

"Give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities; Create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians..."

– I don't think anyone could disagree: the proposed changes go completely against these two statements. The 1-way flow due to number of cars parking won't get better in future, which I address next:

2, the response re school future demographic is not correct: it makes assumptions which aren't supported by calculations: I've share those calculations with you both before, (9/9/20 and 15/9/21), and they were acknowledged at the time – it's really simple to show:

Gagle Brook School (GBS) = 230 pupils capacity for its existing site, plus ~20 teachers and supporting staff. So a fair estimate of 8-9AM trips would be 230 trips TO, and 225 FROM.

Long-term Travel Mode Shares for GBS, were shown in that report in Table 8.4: GBS has target of 30% Vehicle Trips max. Logical to assume the 17.4% "containment" doesn't apply here, or is part of the 70% non-vehicle trips. So we should see $230 \times 0.3 = 69$ trips TO GBS, and $225 \times 0.3 = 68$ (67.5) trips FROM GBS, during this time window.

Trip Generation predictions, shown a few pages later in the same report, in Table 8.8, however, show prediction of 19 and 4 trips, respectively to/from, total 23; not 69 and 68 trips, total 137.

This is six times different! (You'll note this concurs with traffic monitoring/surveys from 2019 and 2021, which I've previously sent to you.

It seems this huge difference is because the model inputs used only Trip Rates based on Ecotown growth to 2026, i.e. at a small % of its full size, and thus not many trips because not many kids. However, it's the Catchment Area for Bucknell and Caversfield too, and 2018-2021, it had ~80% non-Elmsbrook pupil and staff residence demographic.

A true long-term model must be based on the school reaching full capacity, and designing to meet 30% vehicle trips – i.e. that's what should be simulated. If you actually simulate for 6x less trips, then you've actually just simulated for 5% vehicle trips!

So this shows that the argument re school demographic simply doesn't hold: current traffic figures are not wrong – and as I stated in my previous email response, and in documents sent to you in 2019-21, the long-term future equilibrium condition that would be reached is worse than what we see now. Claiming the long term vehicle trip figures will be better is provably untrue.

3, It gets worse! – the Firethorn figures are in error, and simulations show further omissions:

VTP/Firethorn state the school's required Max Vehicle Trips as 20%, not 30%. The 20% figure is, AFAIK, only ever stated in the school's Travel Plan - it is the school's long term "aspirational goal", put in by the original Headmaster: I know because I wrote the Travel Plan!! It is not the legal requirement based on the Masterplan, which is also stated in the school's Travel Plan, and is surely what should have been used.

Even if the aspirational goal were realised, 20% is still 4x the number of trips in the simulation, and an error of this magnitude cannot be ignored! - it will still completely overload the B4100 junction, just yards from the A4095 Ring Road.

Furthermore, in VTP's various Trip Generation Base Traffic Flow maps/plots for 8-9AM, there are no vehicles shown at all with a "source or sink" at the location of GBS – implying no trips to it exist. So this is even worse! Where have these trips and vehicles gone?!?!?

We asked VTP this, and via Objection comments, and have never had a response – similar to the result where adding Firethorn onto Elmsbrook Phases 3/4 is 3x the number of houses, but they claim only 2x the number of trips! How can a model that gives results like this be trusted? It can't: it needs to be properly Validated (see point 4 below) – so that it can accurately predict traffic now. Until that point, we can't trust it to predict the future growth of the Ecotown at all.

4, The argument that Model Validation isn't required for Elmsbrook doesn't agree with the recommendations in literature on this subject:

The argument that a wide-scale traffic model has been validated and so can be entirely trusted simply isn't true – because any small individual local omissions won't be noticed in validation testing, just larger/overall ones. So when a small area with an error is key to the adjacent extension to build new homes/roads, and increase the traffic levels, it will make errors from reality that validation simply cannot predict.

We understand that the validated traffic simulation model used pre-dates the construction of most of Elmsbrook – for example, Phase 2 was still being built in 2019. In which case: how can this whole area of the model have been validated in 2016? The only way it could is if comparison with traffic monitoring and surveys since 2019 has been – but you responded that it hasn't been, and there's no need. How can this be true? And we know that the model doesn't predict these correctly, for the homes, the school or the business centre, because we did the comparisons and sent these to you (in 2020/21).

Literature in this field concurs: e.g. from "A Review of Guidelines for Applying Traffic Simulation to Level-of-service Analysis", by Johan Olstam and Andreas Tapani (Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 16 (2011) 771–780), where in the section on Model Validation they state:

"Software validation can be neglected when using established and accepted traffic simulation packages. Validation of the model of the facility under consideration is however still necessary." – i.e. you have to validate against Elmsbrook itself, before you can extend around it.

To do otherwise is to ignore data/evidence. Considering the errors in the previous points as well, it's clear that the model components for Elmsbrook have simply never been set up to match reality, which is a fundamental requirement of modelling and validation. Until this is done, and the simulations repeated, not only is there no evidence to indicate non-Severe traffic impacts: all the evidence currently suggests it is likely to cause irreversible catastrophic damage to the road network of NW Bicester in the future, affecting way beyond Elmsbrook and Firethorn.

Surely the onus should be on the applicant to prove the effects are NOT Severe; they have not done so in a trustable, reliable way, and thus it is wrong for planning consent to be given, based on what is required from NPPF prg. 111. (Yes, as you state in point 9.68 in the Planning committee report, there is no precise definition of "Severe" – but the above all remains true: you cannot argue at all from flawed data.)

Would it be possible to meet with you after your report is finished, but before the committee meeting itself? Would you acknowledge any issues – when better explained to you! – at that late stage, as you did before? Or do you feel there's zero choice now, but to let it go to committee, even if we convince you of absolutely valid technical reasons why it should not?

I can see that you have been put under considerable pressure by the applicant, ref the 10-day prior notification for the Public Inquiry procedure. In fact, from all of this, I feel very concerned about how much pressure is being applied to you: something doesn't feel right. It seems the long delays are because the applicant is being very unreasonable, whereas you have both tried hard to accommodate everything they have suggested – presumably through many meetings, going through analyses and diagrams etc. – whereas we've simply not had the chance to show our points more clearly, in a meeting – and 5 minutes next Thursday, no slides/papers, won't allow that either!

I wonder: would it not be better to simply let it go to the Inquiry, rather than support something which I think you know, deep down, is flawed, watered-down, and will mess up the ecotown and road network for the future? That's a pretty heavy cost: surely, in a Public Inquiry, we would actually get properly into the technical flaws? My concern

is: you and Joy are lovely people, from my brief experiences of talking to you – if you put this through on Wednesday, and if it's Rejected at Committee next week, won't this look worse at the Public Inquiry?

A further quick question: I know you say "further negotiations..." re the FVA, but has anyone in your team acknowledged the Objection which pointed out the flaws in the Financial Viability Assessment report? - and put these points to your consultant who was involved in this? It seems to me that without that straightened out prior to committee, the available funds for "eco-ness of build" and increasing % Affordable homes are not actually known; this might change the decision made!

(I am not an expert in this, but one of the team that wrote that Objection/Review is a financial specialist in land evaluation, and he simply could not believe that an outdated/unrealistic method had been allowed to the assessment, for a crucial figure in the whole calculation, where the land value has been grossly overstated. It seems to me you would want to get this right?)

A final plea! :-

I fully understand it's "very challenging" to build at the moment - but (1) abandoning proper eco-home build standards, and (2) allowing 10% Affordable homes, will set a precedent that will be followed by the next 5000 ecotown homes, and other estates round Bicester...and according to BioRegional, the whole industry is watching - as it will affect the future 'eco' credentials of new builds. Everyone I speak to on this – from sustainability consultants, to local residents, the School governors, Business Centre employees, local councillors...all use words like "crazy" and "crackers." NB – I hope you've seen the recent news headlines, re several studies indicating that carbon offsetting schemes simply don't work – they overestimate the benefits by orders of magnitude. The only way to build an ecotown is in the build itself.

We've been here before in the building industry, from the 2008 global recession, for several years. I know the old maxim: "But we've got to build more new homes, but it's really tough – so something has to give!"

But...the ecotown? And 30% down to 10% Affordability?

And with 2 more huge Ecotown proposals hot on the heels of this one – adding 4000+ homes to this mere 500: shouldn't this have a proper traffic network analysis – maybe even one which actually simulates "Existing plus Firethorn plus Hallam plus A2D Howes L." all in one, and thus calculates the significant compound effects they'll create – rather than 3x singleton "Existing plus just this one new" – which they're all doing together, simultaneously, meaning the true impact is not actually assessed? So, if they were all to come in "big queues, just about ok", wouldn't that mean, in reality, the whole road network is screwed? (Please remember: I've been a Principal Consultant in data science/analytics for the UK gov, working across many agencies, for the last 2 decades, and currently part of my role is on the NDS: this is the sort of thing I'm employed to point out and work to solve!!!). I am so sorry if I am still misunderstanding something, please do correct me wherever I am wrong: but, I don't believe I've added to the points I've been making continually for the past 3 years, and the core points are either unaddressed still, or the responses appear flawed...so I remain deeply concerned.

3/2/23: CDC Planning Reply:

Apologies for the delay.

I am sure that you will have now noted that the application is not included on the agenda for the Planning Committee meeting next Thursday – 9th February 2023. This is because we were notified on Tuesday that the applicant has lodged a planning appeal against the non-determination of this planning application. The Council are therefore no longer able to make a decision on this application and it will be considered by the Planning Inspectorate in due course. The application may be presented to Planning Committee to determine what their decision would have been and therefore how the Council will defend the appeal although this is to be considered in due course. We also need to consider the appellant's grounds of appeal and how to advise Members, hence it will not be considered next week. We have not received a start date for the appeal yet therefore no notifications have been sent out formally – this will only be done once we know that it is a valid appeal and a start date has been issued with a timeline for the appeal – this may take some time as we are reliant on the Inspectorate.

With regard to the transport matters you raise, these will now be points that you will need to submit to the Planning Inspectorate for their consideration in due course. As mentioned, the Highway Authority have not objected and therefore Officers would not be advising Members to pursue a transport objection at appeal.

With regard to viability and S106, this is a matter that Officers are likely to need to continue negotiations in relation to because parties are expected to behave reasonably at all stages of the planning and appeal process (and costs could be awarded if there is a failure in this respect). It is common for S106 matters to continue to be negotiated in the lead up to an appeal to attempt to reach agreement.

I trust this helps for now and the Council will be in touch with further information regarding the appeal in due course.

13/2/23: ETPG to OCC Highways:

I am writing to you on behalf of Elmsbrook residents, Gagle Brook school, the Eco Business Centre, and all of our key local councillors – concerning the remaining unresolved points re Firethorn's application 21/01630/OUT.

Please can one or more of us meet with you (and colleague(s)) ASAP, so that we can discuss these face-to-face, use diagrams etc., and work to align our understanding in an efficient and effective way. I/we would be happy to travel to you, at a time/date/location of your specification – could you spare 1 hour sometime during the week of 20 February?

The key remaining points (numbered 1-4) were set out in my last email to yourself and Caroline (sent 31/1/23). Please also consider our previous interactions with OCC re Elmsbrook traffic issues: at a meeting on 5/12/2018 with OCC, all details of the road network, errors in the original ecotown TA, and the school's projected growth rate were outlined. Rachid Bbosa concurred that the road network problems as things stood then (and still stand now) were critical and that this needed to be addressed urgently in the next application. (This seems to have been forgotten, and instead, the Firethorn current design is set to make things worse, and considerably increase the danger for children walking / crossing the roads to get to school.)

I hope that you meet with us now, prior to the crucial vote we assume will take place on this, on 9 March. Our aim is to try to align with you going forward – before things are taken further by the wider Elmsbrook committee: they are already involving legal advisors and scoping independent highways consultants, and I suspect you will soon get an official request to explain several points, not coming from me and my team (Traffic and Parking).

We would much rather reach a common set of understandings upfront, i.e. now, so that Residents, the school and EBC, local councillors, yourselves and CDC's planning committee, would all be on the same page going forward.

15/2/23: OCC Highways reply, Cc CDC Planning and another member of OCC Highways:

Thank you for your email. As you may know, an appeal has been lodged by Firethorn so the decision will no longer be made by the planning authority. The highway authority's position of non objection, subject to conditions and obligations, has been made clear and we won't be changing this. However, there may be some benefit for your groups to engage with the appellant, if they are willing, and I would support this and attend if necessary.

15/2/23: ETPG reply:

After discussion with our councillors and a recently-retired planning officer, my understanding is that the decision will only "no longer be made" by CDC planning IF it actually goes to Appeal. I am told that it will most likely go to Committee on 9 March - is this not correct? (Caroline?)

If it goes to Committee, to see "what the decision would have been", and it is Accepted, then I presume the applicant simply withdraws the Appeal request, and they have consent to go ahead. So therefore it is crucial that the explanations regarding the unaddressed points we have raised with you (that we have been asking for the past 18+ months) are fully addressed - so that those involved in making the decisions are properly/accurately informed.

We fully understand that you are not going to change your position. What we want to understand is why you will not address certain things, in particular the errors and omissions we have pointed out - and we believe that our recent calculations (sent to you a few weeks ago) show very clearly that the certain key arguments in the most

recent OCC Highways response are demonstrably wrong. Do you not have an obligation to correct these, such that the report presented to the Committee does not contain any errors? (And likewise for the errors in TN004, and implications thereof? Should these not be investigated and dealt with before going to Committee?)

I am also concerned about aspects which appear to be ignored by OCC Highways responses perhaps because they are considered to be "out of your remit" - because if they are not in your remit, then perhaps they should be within that of CDC Planning - but if the latter take your position of non objection to mean all traffic matters are resolved, then we want to understand who is actually responsible for them. For example, why the impact of the school traffic/parking is not addressed. This is reality, acknowledged all round, OCC Highways and CDC Planning have both acknowledged a solution is needed at this point before the adjacent phases make things worse, yet this is being completely ignored. We need to understand why.

Based on the above, it seems perfectly reasonable that we should meet - please can we do so?

We would be happy to also meet with the applicant - but we would like to meet with you first to understand these issues. Furthermore, we have recently heard a rumour from building industry contacts regarding Firethorn never having built a house before, and based on the histories of the US-based leaders involved, it is apparently believed that they have intention of building the homes themselves: they are merely trying to get the best deal they can in outline planning, and then sell to a developer at profit. So we are waiting to find out more about this before contacting the developer, as we want to "go in" knowing as much as we can!

But to conclude, re our request to meet with you and/or someone else in your team: as I wrote in my last email - I have been given the impression that several of our councillors are planning to write to you anyway, to request the exact same response explanations as we have asked for. If you were to meet with us asap, we can "head this off" early?! I have been a government employee for almost twenty years, working across many departments - so I am fully supportive of your team(s) and the difficult/important work that you do; and I have always found this type of approach to be the best kind of way to work! - get the technical details all cleared up asap!!

We would be very grateful for your constructive engagement - or at least a proper explanation of why you won't or cannot meet, and why we have had emails ignored and feel "pushed away" ever since my video call with Joy on 15/9/2021. We have offered to travel to your offices - even for just a half hour meeting: surely you/someone could "fit us in" ?

15/2/23: CDC Planning reply:

Just to clarify – an appeal has been lodged and this will not change now. The Council will not be the decision maker on this planning application.

Regarding the Committee date, we are still considering the position and need to take legal advice as to how best to deal with this appeal. Even if we were to ask the Planning Committee to confirm what they would have done, and should they resolve that they would have approved the application, then the appeal will still proceed. However, I must stress that this is general advice at this stage because as above, we need to take legal advice on this case.

(The next email from **OCC Highways** was then to arrange to meet, via video call on the 23rd of February 2023. This was also attended by representatives of CDC Planning, Bicester BUG, and Bicester Town Council. A further email was sent on ETPG/BBUG/the local council's behalf, by a local councillor, to another member of OCC Highways, asking for a formal response to the unanswered questions from the meeting; however, no reply was forthcoming, and no further emails have been exchanged since.)

APPENDIX 2 : ETPG: Emails from/to VTP Highways 2021

8/4/21: Arranged introductory email from VTP to ETPG

Many thanks for your time on the phone earlier today, it was a very useful discussion and I am pleased that you have been so diligently gathering traffic data that was difficult for us to obtain during the current pandemic. I don't think it matters too much that some of this information might have been from 2018 as it is likely to still be useful and as I mentioned, data is king when it comes to traffic assessment work.

Please send across what you have and I will review this information to hopefully include within our technical work, where appropriate. If I do feel the need to include anything, I will be sure to let you know prior to submission and to ensure that you are happy for us to name you as a source of this information.

You now have my contact details and if you would like to discuss any of the information that you will review as part of the forthcoming planning application, or if you would like to catch up regarding other highway matters in the area, please feel free to touch base.

11/5/21: ETPG reply to VTP

Hope you are doing really well, in this mixed-weather May we are having so far! Please accept my humble apologies for not replying to your email sooner, with at least an acknowledgement - I've been struggling a bit with sinusitis/hay fever/medications the last few weeks, and catching up work - but I should finally have time later this week to - at long last! - dig out the various surveys and sort-of-finished reports I wrote on this for you: I will take the trouble of a few hours work to try to make sure they are (a) up to date and (b) in a useful state for you (the onset of Covid last Spring left several elements part-completed) - so as to not waste lots of your time parsing them.

Thank you also, for the excellent phone conversation we had: it was very good of you to explain so much of the wider local context to me, and I did then respond to both local consultations in the manner I'd been planning - incl. to make the point regarding the need to use the most up-to-date and holistic datasets to determine the most viable solution(s). I am also waiting to see if our local councillors are going to arrange a meeting for myself and Sarah (Nolan) to perhaps meet with Joy White and Mike Smith to discuss some of these things (I'm now guessing these folks may not be wanting such a meeting!! - but we'll see!)

Best regards - and a lot more coming soon!

11/5/21: VTP reply:

Good to hear from you, but sorry to hear that you have been under the weather.

I look forward to receiving the further information from you, which I am positive will be helpful when we start to negotiate how best to address the potential impacts from the proposed development.

For your information, the Planning Application has now been submitted to Cherwell District Council, but has yet to be validated. As such, the supporting documents and information may not be uploaded to the CDC Planning Portal yet.

7/6/21: ETPG reply:

Argh! So sorry for yet more weeks of delay: I've had another couple of weeks sick, and half-term with the kids last week...finally I have a bit of energy and brainpower, and am able to respond to you. Hope you are doing really well, by the way!

So far this morning: I have started on the documents to send you, am doing this in approx. "order of usefulness for you" (i.e. most useful first!)

So: finally!: please find attached:

(1) The Powerpoint slides we did (me, with intros by the Gagle Brook School [GBS] headmaster Drew, and Eco Business School [EBC] chief Lucy) to a few key people at Cherwell District Council [CDC! Getting TLA O/L already?!] on 9 September last year. (Have renamed this to something more helpful to you, btw!)

(2) Have just updated the original notes I made for myself and used while presenting it, so that these contain as much as possible (i.e. of what I can recall...) of what I said but isn't in the picture/diagram slides. (NB: a couple of things in brackets I may have chosen not to say at the time!!!) Also note: I haven't updated to any mention of the latest planning application - this work doesn't even mention its predecessor, if I remember right).

Next I will send the (3) School travel surveys - will add in the 2020 one that the Headmaster did, followed by (4) the traffic surveys I did and comparison with Traffic Monitoring data from Laura F @Mode, and then have an initial look at your Transport Assessment for the new application - and send (5) any initial comments I can think of.

Hope this is a useful start though: together, the attached 2 items should, I hope, give you the true impression of the impact the School lack-of-parking plus bottlenecks at the park already has. And this is before you add ~130 new homes also using this road... To put it bluntly: "if it ain't sorted properly, it all gonna jam!!!"

Best regards, and much more from me very soon!!!

8/6/21: VTP reply:

Many thanks for sending across your comprehensive presentation. I can see that you have clearly spent a considerable amount of time drawing your information together, and it is very logical and well presented.

As I am sure that you are now aware, the planning application for Land at North West Bicester Home Farm, Lower Farm and SGR2 Caversfield that is to be accessed from Charlotte Avenue and Braeburn Avenue, is now available to view on the CDC Planning Portal (application ref 21/01630/OUT).

As we start to get some feedback from the statutory consultees, including OCC, in relation to the Traffic Assessment that was submitted, I am sure that some of your information will assist in how we respond to the authority. I think your parking analysis information is very thorough and will be very informative.

Many thanks again for making this information available, and please note that I will not make any of your information public without your consent.

8/6/21: ETPG reply:

Many thanks for your kind words - and do let me know any thoughts you have/errors you spot etc!

Please find attached the next bit from me: (3) - I've combined the 2x Gagle Brook travel surveys, plus my analysis of future trends, into one document, and put a few small update comments in, to bring various aspects up to date (i.e. to the best of my knowledge, as of late last night!!).

Am just reading through the Traffic Assessment appendices for the current application now...obviously, my initial "headline" concern is the concluding calculation of an RFC of 0.87 at the Charlotte Avenue-B4100 junction for 2031 Do Something (Table 9.1) - because with some of the issues we know of (bottlenecks, school, model omissions...), all of these would likely push this value even higher... It feels very cruel that none of the fault is in your work - it is in things outside your control (school, bottlenecks) and things you've been forced to go with (model, road accesses). I will need to discuss this with others in the local residents group, and see whom at OCC and CDC they would want to email about this. (Happy to take any further steer and thoughts from yourself on this, also).

Traffic surveys and monitoring comparison/analysis to follow (i.e. where the model underestimation figures come from!) soon - sadly, I've got to pause on this, to review the Acoustics Design document for the new Community Hub building, which A2 have just sent me (ready for a long meeting on that this afternoon...fingers crossed I won't find any errors!). (Then I might actually get back to some actual proper paid work! ;-)

Best regards - and speak to you soon.

7/7/21: ETPG follow up email:

Hope all is going well with you. Please find attached item (4) (as referenced and promised in my previous emails!) - this brings together a few separate docs of survey data and comparison with Mode's Traffic Monitoring data covering the initial surveys period, September to December 2019 inclusive.

I also undertook another early morning survey, a couple of weeks ago, on a typical Tuesday, from 0720-0905 (when I had a free early morning day!) - and have thus been able to briefly add in some extended results/calcs based on this. A couple of interesting points came from this: that the 8-9am traffic coming through the B4100 onto Charlotte Avenue junction is significantly higher than September 2019 (admittedly, based on a single day's measurements, but...) - i.e. it's NOT reduced by Covid-19/home-working. Note that this means the amount by which the trip simulations done for the 2015 Transport Assessment for the Exemplar phase, which they define as for 2026, underestimate the true traffic in 2021 is higher - up from 97% (2019) to 126% (2021) - and with the new school year coming in September, this might increase again to 150%, i.e. 2.5 times, all else being equal. (Because I could separate the school and Business Centre traffic, I could also estimate the current level of traffic reduction due to home working - at about 10%. Don't know how useful that all is, but can check it again later in the year, and see if it has changed, I suppose?!)

Hopefully this will give you the full picture of what is actually going on, up and down Charlotte Avenue, at the peak traffic times! - and some more understanding, supporting what I sent previously. Please don't hesitate to contact me re any queries/thoughts etc. As you can imagine, there's been a lot of activity up and down Elmsbrook in the last few weeks, as more people read different bits of the documentation, and asked me for the traffic related analysis, and parking questions, some queries from the cycling fanatics, etc. I tried to keep my answers as constructive/balanced as possible, only used what I could find in the documents (i.e. not including other things I could recall you told me during our phone call - e.g. re Highways England saying that Joy White was wrong to limit you to the 2014 BTM); and I even phoned Caroline Ford @CDC Planning, to ask if there was anything else we could constructively do 'up front' to save everyone time/effort. I hope that everyone will see logical sense, and all issues can be resolved to best knowledge.

Hope you have been enjoying the BBQ weather also - now we can do some such social meetings again! Keep healthy, and hope to catch up with you some point soon, if there's any way I can be of assistance to you.

Warm regards.

13/9/21: ETPG follow up email:

I hope you are well, and have had a good summer. (We finally have the kids back to school, and I can finally begin to catch up with the long-grown To Do List!!!)

I am wondering if it would be worth us having a catch up phone call? I'm hopeful that the residents' analysis and replies regarding the Firethorn proposal have been helpful to some extent at least, in pushing things in the right direction, and that we've not done anything unhelpful to your good self - I did the best I could with my inputs, based on what you and I discussed, and with what several other keenly-involved residents brought to the analysis. However: I have now read Joy White's response on behalf of OCC, some of the points don't make sense, don't cover issues properly or at all, and/or don't agree with things you told me when we originally spoke - and she has concluded the RFC = 0.87 is not acceptable, but is still constraining the road network, with zero hint of flexibility there...

...I feel like there is still work to be done here! I am therefore planning to email her, to ask to meet in person, to go through some aspects of this. I therefore wondered if it would be useful for us to speak first, so that I can be sure to focus on what would be useful for you (and, crucially, not waste time/mistakenly push anything in the wrong direction!). I've spoken to both our local councillors and members of Caversfield Parish Council, in recent weeks, and all are supportive of ensuring that the bigger picture for the local road network is done correctly, now, for the benefit of all.

Hope to hear from you soon,

Best wishes.

13/9/21: VTP reply:

It's good to hear from you again, and thank you for keeping in touch and providing the bits and pieces you have to date.

For info, I have a meeting with Joy White (OCC) and Caroline Ford (CDC) tomorrow morning, so it might be worthwhile holding off on having a chat until I have caught up with them. That way, I will be able to provide you with an update on the latest position. I am away from the office from Wednesday until Monday morning next week, so if you are available tomorrow afternoon, that would probably be the best time for us to catch up on the phone.

Joy White's response to the application may come across as being 'heavy handed' and in some instances, slightly confusing, but she had explained why she had responded in the way she had to me when we touched base about a month ago following the initial receipt of these comments. I'll give you a little more insight into this when we catch up on the phone later this week.

(13/9/21: ETPG and VTP send further replies each way, simply to organise a phone chat on 14/9/21)

22/9/21: ETPG follow up, after video call meeting with a member of OCC Highways:

Many thanks again for updating me in our phone call last Tuesday. I am just writing, as promised, to let you know the results of my 1:1 with Joy White last Wednesday morning. Details as follows!

Good news! - Joy thinks temporary access for construction should be granted into the Eastern parcel, i.e. the field by the Home Farm entrance – and that construction traffic should indeed be given a “crossing” over the Charlotte/Braeburn link to access the larger Western parcel. (She thinks this might be the only valid solution, unless a better option for the Western parcel access can be created.)

She said that attention to detail for the internal Elmsbrook roads has not been good enough, to date. She also concurred that the school situation was not designed correctly, and that the issues this has caused need resolving.

She seems to believe that no homes should have access via Charlotte Avenue / Phases 1 and 2: she doesn't think Charlotte Avenue at the end of Phase 2 will turn out to be suitable for any more homes to be added onto here.

She is not against the idea of a 3rd access junction in. In fact, she sees no reason why the temporary access onto Eastern parcel couldn't become a permanent access. So, while I had understood from yourself that having only the two existing access junctions (i.e. via Elmsbrook) was a constraint still imposed by OCC, it appears that this is not/no longer the case. (Do you consider that good or bad?!) However, we both agreed that the way the Western parcel is then accessed still remains a good question.

I clarified for her that residents support the ecotown (we moved here understanding it would grow to thousands of homes!), and that we are impressed by Firethorn and their contractors, and would rather it is them building the next phases than anyone else! But we are concerned that, if these 530 homes are built with the road network access as it is proposed, it will overload the internal NW Bicester roads AND impact the B4100 to Ring Road very significantly.

I explained that what we want to see is a traffic model which uses all the information known now, and has been tested to verify it can accurately predict 2019 and 2021 levels correctly in the first place (rather than underestimating them so significantly). Then, different designs can be assessed until RFCs for access points – with an accurate model for which we can trust the results it produces – until an optimum design with acceptable RFCs is determined. I explained more detail of the updates needed for the model, including the impacts of the bottlenecks on both Charlotte and Braeburn Avenues, and removing the 35% containment assumption.

I noted that I had spoken with you, and that there are direct contradictions between what you believe is the most up-to-date model, and what it contains, and what her response stated: this really needs to be resolved. I said I'd be happy to meet with her Transport Strategy group colleagues at OCC, to discuss the model results vs reality in detail, if that would be helpful? She said she will contact them to ask.

She asked: if these model improvements are made – and she conjectured that there's no reason to suspect Firethorn would be willing to pay for this level of modelling to be done – what did we think could be done to mitigate the problems?

I said: I think there's a real risk that no version of amendments to Charlotte/Braeburn junctions to B4100 will give low enough RFCs, once a verified accurate model is used. We think (and suggested) a 3rd access road/junction might be one way to achieve low enough RFCs (i.e. for all three). I also mentioned ideas re Aunt Ems Lane, and questioned re the B4100 speed limit (it will stay 40...), and connectivity to Caversfield via bus and bike.

I also noted that Firethorn should be concerned about either (1) inaccurate traffic data meaning they end up paying more to OCC than they should; or (2) the risk of someone going for a Judicial Review, because we have been pointing out the errors of the modelling vs reality for almost 3 years now! - because nobody wants it to go down that route – not us, Firethorn, OCC or CDC! Joy said she would talk to Caroline Ford on this point.

She stated that OCC's strategy is no longer to "predict and provide" for vehicle traffic/parking, but to 'promote' - a move away from vehicles. I said this neglects drivers moving to electric / other types of 'greener' vehicle (even though these aren't perfect by any means) – noting this was missed in the original Masterplan TA as well. She noted that electric vehicles are a "thorn in the side" of transport planning! I noted the electric car proportion on Elmsbrook is MANY TIMES higher than national or regional average! (By a factor of 30-40, IIRC!)

Finally, I raised the wider concern: that they need to include ALL future developments affecting the A4095/B4100 junction: otherwise, by the time it's been expanded, we will be playing catch up again.

She said: 2031 traffic trip rates are about 0.5, that seems reasonable to me. The issues with bottlenecks etc missing in the model will only affect the internal NW Bicester Roads.

I said: I'm not sure that's true. Firstly, traffic already reaches past the Charlotte Avenue junction at times in the mornings - even beyond Aunt Ems Lane at times; therefore an existing interaction with vehicles entering/exiting is being missed. Secondly, the bottlenecks plus the school area will very likely cause traffic to consistently jam all the way back to the Charlotte Avenue/B4100 junction within the estate, due to the sheer length of the "single flow" this creates in Phase 2, and the number of roads plus EBC/Cafe/Energy Centre with access in Phase 1 - thereby affecting the B4100 directly as well.

(At this point we ran out of time, and I thanked her very much for listening, and our proposed actions.)

Hope that is useful? Do let me know any thoughts you have re any of the points, in case further discussion and/or follow up with Joy (or Caroline Ford) would be useful.

I would particularly be interested to hear your thoughts re a third access junction for the proposed development, and regarding modelling the bottlenecks within Elmsbrook: we've just (yesterday!) had a "full day traffic/transport assessment" done on behalf of Mode/A2D, which I expect will confirm the existing model(s) and original simulations under-predict 2021 levels by > 100%, i.e. as I measured for the 8-9am peak hour back in June, showing the increase from 2019 survey and modelling data.

Hope you had a good week/few days off/away, by the way, and wishing you a great week ahead; talk to you soon :-)

(No further replies were ever received; no acknowledgement was ever given of the errors in statements made in previous phone calls; Technical Notes continued to appear, without acknowledging any of the points in the last email above.)