

Request for Scoping Opinion for the proposed 'Access to Witney' scheme involving the construction of two new west-facing slip roads at the Shores Green junction of the A40.

Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) are consulting on the above proposals in order to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion. The link to the consultation is here: <https://myeplanning2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Planning/Display/R3.0079/21?cuuid=815BC684-3CA2-447E-91E3-4393DF49E67D>

Members are asked to consider the information and formulate a response on which topics you consider the EIA should address. Please note this is not a planning application and this consultation is to determine the scope of the EIA. If a planning application is subsequently made we will be consulted again.

Background

OCC are looking for a written response outlining any planning matters that members feel are not already adequately covered by the proposed EIA, or perhaps there are questions about the methodology of a particular technical topic. There is much more detail in the full document and this document is not intended to be a summary of the full information, rather just an outline of what the document covers and the variety of topics that might be of interest.

This EIA Scoping Report sets out the proposed scope of the EIA to be undertaken in respect of the A40 Access to Witney project. The Applicant has chosen to undertake an EIA and to submit an Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany the planning application for the proposed development.

EIA scoping forms one of the early stages of the EIA process and refers to the activity of identifying the elements of the environment that should be considered within the EIA.

EIA scoping initiates the process of defining the potential for significant environmental effects, which in turn results in the identification of the environmental factors that require consideration and assessment as part of the EIA.

The objectives of this EIA Scoping Report are to:

- set out the proposed scope of the EIA (i.e. identify which environmental topics are to be 'scoped in' or 'out'), taking into account what is currently known about the site and the proposed development;
- facilitate consultation with the Authority and other relevant statutory bodies on the environmental issues to be addressed as part of the EIA and design development process;
- set out what additional information needs to be collected (i.e. through desk-based studies or field survey work) to characterise the baseline environment of the site;
- define the assessment methods to be used to determine the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development;
- identify potential environmental impacts and effects and opportunities for mitigation; and EIA Scoping Report Access to Witney
- set out the proposed structure of the ES.

EIA Methodology

5.4 This section outlines the general methodology to be used throughout the ES. The approaches for individual technical topics are provided in the technical sections of this EIA Scoping Report (Sections 6 to 16).

5.5 Each technical chapter of the ES will define the baseline against which the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development will be assessed. Study areas for defining baseline conditions will vary according to the technical assessment, available baseline information and the nature of potential impacts. The study area for each topic has been defined within the technical sections of this EIA Scoping Report.

5.6 Following on from the definition of the baseline conditions, the impact of the proposed development will be assessed during the enabling works and construction phase, and during operation of the completed proposed development. Mitigation measures will be identified to eliminate, mitigate or reduce adverse effects and following the incorporation of mitigation measures, the significance of any remaining residual effects will be defined by applying a standard set of significance criteria. Cumulative effects will then be assessed (see below for further details).

5.7 In summary, each technical chapter of the ES will:

- outline regulatory and policy framework relevant to the assessment;
- outline the assessment methodology;
- describe the baseline conditions;
- describe environmental mitigation measures that have been implemented into the design of the proposed development to reduce environmental effects (i.e. embedded mitigation);
- report the assessment of the likely effects of the proposed development with embedded mitigation in place;
- particularly where significant adverse environmental effects are identified, advise on additional mitigation and monitoring measures required (i.e. essential mitigation);
- report the likely effects of the proposed development again with essential mitigation and monitoring measures also in place; and
- report the likely effects of the proposed development together with likely effects arising cumulatively with other relevant schemes.

Consideration of Alternatives

5.25 The EIA process provides an opportunity to consider alternative development options with their respective environmental effects before a final decision is taken on the design. In accordance with the EIA Regulations and DMRB LA 104 Environmental assessment and monitoring, the ES will describe those alternatives that were considered by the Applicant and project team, including:

- ‘Do nothing scenario’ – The consequences of no development taking place on the site;
- ‘Modal alternatives’ – The rationale behind choosing this type of solution;
- ‘Location alternatives’ – The rationale behind choosing the site; and

- ‘Design alternatives’ – The ES will summarise the evolution of the design of the proposed development; the modifications which have taken place to date and the environmental considerations which have led to those modifications. A summary of the main alternatives considered, will be presented together with a summary justification for the final design.

Eleven technical topics are covered, with detail on existing baseline, potential impacts, assessment methodology, significance criteria etc. The topics are laid out in the following sections:

6. Air Quality
7. Biodiversity
8. Climate Change
9. Cultural Heritage
10. Geology and Soils
11. Landscape and Visual
12. Material Assets and Waste
13. Noise and Vibration
14. Population and Human Health
15. Road drainage and the Water Environment
16. Traffic and Transport

A summary of the proposed scope of the EIA is given in Table 17-1.

This summarises the conclusions of this EIA Scoping Report in terms of the environmental topics that are considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

Proposed Scope of the EIA

Table 17-1 Summary of the proposed scope of the EIA **Scoping summary**

Topic

Air Quality

A qualitative construction phase dust assessment and quantitative operational phase local air quality assessment have been **scoped in**.

If it is determined that the construction programme is likely to be longer than 24 months duration, then a quantitative construction phase local air quality assessment will be **scoped in**.

Biodiversity

A biodiversity assessment for both construction and operation has been **scoped in**.

A separate biodiversity net gain assessment will be included with the application and the results cross-referenced in the ES.

An assessment of lifecycle greenhouse gas impacts and an assessment of the

Climate Change	vulnerability of the proposed development to climate change has been scoped in .
Cultural Heritage	<p>An assessment of built heritage during construction and operation has been scoped in.</p> <p>An assessment of buried archaeology during construction has been scoped in.</p>
Geology and Soils	An assessment of geology and soils has been scoped in to the EIA. This will comprise an assessment of effects during the construction phase only on bedrock geology and superficial deposits, including any geological designations present; loss of soil resources and agricultural land; and the effects from contamination on human health, surface water and groundwater.
Landscape and Visual	An assessment of landscape and visual impacts during both construction and operation has been scoped in .
Material Assets and Waste	An assessment of material assets and waste use during the construction of the proposed development has been scoped in .
Noise and Vibration	<p>A noise and vibration assessment, comprising a construction noise and vibration assessment, a construction traffic noise assessment, a qualitative operational vibration assessment and a quantitative operational traffic noise assessment, has therefore been scoped in to the EIA.</p> <p>Should sufficiently detailed information on construction activity and construction traffic be made available, the corresponding assessments would be quantitative in nature; otherwise qualitative assessments will be conducted.</p>
Population and Human Health	An assessment of population and human health has been scoped in .
Road Drainage and the Water Environment	An assessment of road drainage and the water environment during construction and operation has been scoped in .

Traffic and Transport

An assessment of traffic and transport has been **scoped in**.

Major Accidents and Disasters

An assessment of major events has been **scoped out**. Where relevant, the risk of major events will be reported in other ES chapters. Road traffic accidents will be captured in the Transport Assessment. Ground stability, structures assessment, fire, safety and security will be considered in other documents to be submitted with the planning application.

The full document also includes helpful maps, layout options, public rights of way, site boundary etc.