

Issue 1

The question remains as to why the two designs that went to consultation had very different junction designs, with Option 12 having three junctions, whilst Option 30 only one¹. It can be clearly seen from the scheme proposals presented for consultation², that Option 12 had additional junctions that were considered not necessary for Option 30. This was meant to be explained by the traffic expert during ISH2 Agenda Item 8, but it was not.

Question: Put simply, can the ExA be appraised as to why Option 12 had a junction at Cowley Roundabout in the design put forward for consultation, whilst it was assessed that Option 30 did not require it. The Applicant during ISH2 stated in response to the question raised that traffic modelling was 'extremely complicated' however it is hard to understand why any modelling would change this requirement at Chainage point zero along the route, other than to reduce cost!

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to why the two designs prior to the consultation had marked differences in junction layout, given that it would be assumed the traffic modelling would have been the same?

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to whether at the time of the consultation, if the junction layouts had been of similar number and design, would the monetised costs and benefits of both options have been more similar or even in favour of Option 12?

Issue 2

In addition, for a road that is only 14% (800m) longer, it is hard to comprehend that the Economic Efficiency³ for Option 30 would be 64% higher than that of Option 12! In the Combined appraisal summary results⁴ referred to in ISH2 show for 'Commuting and other users' the benefit of Option 30 to be 85% higher than Option 12!

The Technical Appraisal Report states⁵ that 'Option 12 is the cheapest option that has been considered at this stage, but the lower scheme cost is offset by the comparatively poor levels of benefit that are generated, which result in an initial BCR of 0.55 and an adjusted BCR of 0.68'. The 'poor levels of benefit' are predominantly driven by the perceived Economic Efficiencies.

Question: Are the ExA satisfied that the perceived Economic Efficiency of Option 30 would be 64% higher, based on the road being only 800m shorter.

The Scheme Assessment Report (SAR) states that 'Option 30 would divert the strategic road network away from the Cotswolds escarpment'⁶.

Issue 3

At the time of consultation, it was stated that Option 30 would divert the strategic road network away from the Cotswolds escarpment⁷. However, what was not pointed out at the time of consultation was that the existing A417 (on the Cotswold escarpment) would be used to connect the A436 to the Shab Hill junction. Assuming that Option 12 would have been along the same alignment of the current A417, it could be fairly assumed that the feeder route for Option 30 would have the same impact on the escarpment as Option 12 would have.

Question: Are the ExA satisfied that at the time of consultation, the true impact of Option 30 on the Cotswolds escarpment was accurately portrayed, especially as this is one of the main 'perceived benefits' of Option 30 at the time of consultation and was used in the Cost Benefit analysis.

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to what the impact, if any, Option 12 would cause on the escarpment over and above what is there now with the current A417. In addition, can the ExA be appraised as to what design measures could be undertaken to mitigate any perceived impacts on the escarpment, caused by Option 12.

¹ TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018), Page 129, Table 7.2

² TR010056-000608-7.4 Scheme Assessment Report (March 2019), Pages 88, 89

³ TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018), Page 146, Table 9.2

⁴ TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018), Page 197, Table 15.1

⁵ TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018), Page 147, Para 9.3.6

⁶ TR010056-000608-7.4 Scheme Assessment Report (March 2019), Page 12

⁷ TR010056-000608-7.4 Scheme Assessment Report (March 2019), Page 12

Issue 4

The Technical Appraisal Report states on page 54 that the Crickley Hill Country Park is located adjacent to Option 12 and within 1km of Option 30⁸. Can the ExA be appraised as to where Option 30 is assessed to be not adjacent to the Crickley Hill Country Park, as we believe both Options are adjacent.

Question: Considering this, can the ExA be assured that many of the environmental impacts for Option 30 have not been overstated when compared with Option 12, which in turn could have had a biased impact on the consultations.

Issue 5

I attended a virtual A417 Missing Link - project update by Highways England on Thursday 9th November at which a member of Highways England made a point about the “volatile microclimate” that exists where the scheme will be built. I think this was also witnessed by the ExA in September when they visited the site, and there was thick fog! The Technical Appraisal Report has a section on Climate, but this is limited to the Midlands climatic region of England, in which the proposed scheme lies⁹. There is no mention of the “volatile microclimate”.

Question: Highways stated at ISH2 that they were satisfied that they had taken climatic conditions into account. Can the ExA be assured that this microclimate has been accurately modelled, or has the data been based on design meteorological data for the Midlands climatic region of England, which does not represent the “volatile microclimate” that exists in the vicinity of the scheme.

Question: The issue was meant to be addressed further as part of Agenda Item 8 by the Traffic expert, but it was not – can the ExA be assured that sufficient detailed traffic modelling (based on a known volatile microclimate that exists in the geographical location) has been carried out to examine the impact on journey times and safety when this condition exists.

Question: Can the ExA be advised as to whether this “volatile microclimate” could reduce journey times on Option 30 to journey times similar to those achieved on Option 12.

⁸ TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018), Page 54, Para 3.14.20

⁹ TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018), Page 44, Para 3.8