Submission Re Safety Issues in and around Cowley Village

Issue 1 : Road Accidents and Microclimate Safety Concerns

Question:
For the reasons outlined below, is the ExA satisfied that the Applicant has provided adequate robust scenario testing, data and evidence to justify Option 30 over Option 12 regarding safety, RTA and KSI and a microclimate point of view? Is the ExA satisfied that the forecast reduction in KSIs of one per year, and the forecast increase in other accidents is adequate?

RTA and KSI Data
As per their response stated in 2.4.5-2.4.7 Document 8.11 Response to Written Representations Made at Deadline 1, National Highways (NH) have provided their RTA data in Section 3.5 of the Transport Report (Document Reference 7.10, APP-426) and the data behind the assessment, the process and the results in Section 8.4 of the same report. They forecast that there will be " *… a large reduction in the number of killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties, with 66 fewer fatalities forecast over the 60-year appraisal period*" (Section 8.4.7).

NH also reports that it forecasts the scheme will experience disbenefits of increased accident and slight accidents due to the increased traffic volumes. Table 8.4, Sections 8.4.7-8.4.10 Transport Report (document Reference 7.10, APP-426).

This averages out at just over 1 less death a year and an increase in other less severe accidents.

Reducing KSIs by any amount is great, but how can NH justify the safety claims of this scheme if it only reduces deaths by an average of 1 a year? Is there any significant difference in the forecast accidents numbers for Option 12 vs Option 30? And has robust scenario testing factored in the potential increase in accidents during bad weather on Option 30? Is there nothing else that can be done to reduce fatalities by a more significant number than just one a year?

Microclimate and scenario testing
NH have also responded to written representations regarding weather (Section 2.14 Document 8.11 Response to Written Representations Made at Deadline 1), citing the current Vulnerable Location Plan, and that "*the South West Asset Delivery Team at National Highways have been notified of and acknowledge the additional new section of dual carriageway and appropriate planning will be made for winter maintenance*". All of which one would expect to be standard procedure.

In their oral representation on January 27th, when questioned on the provision for the microclimate of the routing of Option 30, the Applicant stated that they are satisfied that it has taken it into account and that there is no need to reduce speed on the part of the carriageway in question. But they did not state what they have done in order to be satisfied. **Has the ExA been appraised of what NH has done in order to be satisfied with this outcome?**

Furthermore, the Inspectorate asked the Applicant about times during the year when climatic conditions reduce actual speed and if any scenario testing had been done for this? And if so, if it would affect the route? The Applicant couldn't reply and said it could be covered by the Arup representative in Agenda Item 8. **However, I am not aware of this being covered during**

Agenda Item 8, or if this question was actually answered, and would therefore respectfully ask if the ExA is satisfied with the response provided?

Issue 2 : Shab Hill Junction Closure Contingency Planning

Question:
Is the ExA satisfied that NH has a robust contingency plan for when the roundabout is blocked at the Shab Hill Junction, which will impact traffic travelling in all directions? Has the ExA been appraised of a contingency plan to ensure traffic does not rat-run through Cowley and Elkstone to get back onto the A417 at the Elkstone Junction, or down through Leckhampton to access the A417 at the Shurdington Junction when the Shab Hill junction is blocked or closed?

The design of Option 30 is such that all local and non-local traffic travelling onto the A417 from Cheltenham, Oxford, etc has to access it at the Shab Hill junction. If there is an accident on the roundabout that causes a subsequent blockage or road closure, ALL traffic trying to access the A417 (whether it's to travel towards Cirencester, Swindon or local areas such as Birdlip and Stroud; or to travel towards the M5, M50, Gloucester and Wales) will be blocked and diverted.

Traffic will inevitably need to get onto the A417 somewhere else and the majority will not take the main-road route of the A436 to Severn Springs and the A435 to Cirencester to get onto the A417 at the Cirencester Junction.

The majority of traffic will turn off the A436 at the junction opposite Ullenwood, and drive into Cowley and onto Elkstone. Or if Cowley lane is an exit onto the A417, vehicles will use it to get back onto the dual carriage way. Many Cowley villagers are concerned that this route will become the main relief road for the majority of traffic when the Shab Hill junction is blocked.

We are also concerned that all east bound traffic travelling to the M5, M50, Gloucester and Wales will have to travel down Leckhampton Hill and into Leckhampton in order to access the A417 at the Shurdington junction. Leckhampton and Warden hill representatives have already expressed concerns about the increase in traffic into this area, and closure of the Shab Hill junction will further exacerbate this issue.

My understanding is that one of the principal reasons for the Missing Link is to reduce rat-running when there are accidents on the A417 or on the Air Balloon roundabout. However, we are very concerned that any closure of the Shab Hill junction will cause far worse rat-running and local gridlock than those we currently experience.

Issue 3 : Safety for all road users in Cowley Village

When questioned in the hearing on January 27th about the forecast increase in traffic on Cowley Lane, Mr Bamforth of Arup stated that, when Cowley Lane becomes a main point of access, the increase in traffic would be "*a very small number overall in terms of average daily traffic*".

Whilst their forecast of a 'low level' increase might be deemed' low' for a main classified road, that has passing places, enables safe overtaking, and has verges or pavements for walkers and horse riders, it cannot be deemed as low or insignificant on a narrow, single track

country lane that does not have any of these. The Applicant has also failed to acknowledge the type of usage of the lanes in the area and to understand that they are used by a lot of leisure users who need to be able to sue the lanes safely.

Arup/the Applicant were unable to provide the data for their justification for 18 cars a day on Cowley Lane. Knowing that this was grossly below the actual number of cars using it daily, Cowley collaborated together to manually count all Cowley Lane users over a 4-day period.

Our count found that an average of 171 vehicles use Cowley Lane between 8am-8pm and 147 at the weekend. What is quite significant, is that at certain times of the weekend there are more walkers per hour than cars – for example on Sunday January 30th there were 38 cars from 12-1pm and 52 walkers. In total on Sunday there were a total of 124 walkers, cyclists and horse riders who used the lane – all of whom need to be able to use the lane safely

It is also worth noting that the number of all users (drivers, walkers, cyclists and riders) will increase considerably in the spring and summer when the weather is nicer and the days are longer.

NH forecast an increase of traffic from 18 per day to 118 (figure adjusted from 180). Based on the same % increase that will equate to an increase of 1123 cars on a weekday and just under 1000 on Saturdays and Sundays.

This is not "*a very small number overall in terms of average daily traffic*" (Arup). It cannot be sustained on this lane and will not be safe for residents or visitors to the village.

In addition there are other exceptional circumstances which make the Cowley Lane and Cowley village unsafe for such high traffic volumes and makes it dangerous :

- The tight blind bend on the lane from Stockwell to Cowley that cars frequently overshoot and drive through a fence and into a field – see photos 1 to 3
- Lack of passing places, verges etc as cited in my last representations at Deadline 2 (TR010056-001194 / TR010056-001155)
- The junction in the bottom of the village that traffic often doesn't stop at properly, and often fails to pay due care and attention at when turning. The local PCSO is aware of the issues based on current traffic levels and has monitored this junction and slowed down traffic here on previous occasions.
- Even though it is a tiny village, Cowley is in a unique position of having 5 lanes that bring traffic directly into the village, many of which are used as rat-runs particularly at peak hours.
- There is a narrow, blind corner in the centre of the village where cars often park causing an obstruction for emergency vehicles – see photos 4-6

  This bend is dangerous due to the cars that park on it, but also because of cars driving around it without due care and attention. The Parish Council bought bollards to prevent cars parking on this bend, but that cannot stop traffic speeding around the narrow corner with little regard for traffic coming from the opposite direction. Increased traffic volumes will further exacerbate this problem

- Due to its beautiful location, proximity to the Green Dragon Pub and Cowley Manor, being near the Cotswold Way and in a AONB we have high numbers of visitors who visit the village for recreational purposes. We also have the Gloucestershire Girl Guide HQ , and the village is used as a route for students on the Duke of Edinburgh hikes.

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Request:
These lanes are already unsafe for the current levels of traffic and I would respectfully request that ask the at the EXA pays an accompanied site visit to examine the lane, the blind bends and the issues within the centre of the village, to ascertain whether they deem Cowley Lane to be safe and suitable for such an increase in traffic volume?

Question:
Is the ExA aware of whether the Applicant has run a safety assessment for Cowley Lane for the forecast increase in traffic? Andi f it has also conducted appropriate environmental and noise tests?

Issue 4 : Rat Running Through Cowley

Many Cowley villagers also strongly question the validity and accuracy of the Applicant's claim, repeated by Mr Bamforth of Arup during the hearing on Jan 27th, that the scheme will reduce rat-running in Cowley.

The route from Severn Springs, into Cowley and up Cowley Lane provides a much shorter and expedient route for vehicles to access the A417 than the alternative route of travelling along the A436 (which has a 50mph speed limit which and is often slower than this due to the lorries and local agricultural machinery that traverse that road) and then onto the A417.

Even when the new scheme is in place, logic dictates that many drivers (particularly works vans) who already know and use this cut-through route, will continue to use it rather than drive the longer slower route along the A436.

Furthermore if Cowley Lane is made into a main source of access onto and off the A417, Cowley will continue to experience this rat-running which will increase in tangent with increased traffic volumes on the A417. Cowley is therefore likely to experience more accidents and more near-misses for walkers and horse riders as a result.

Question:
Is the ExA satisfied that the NH's claims of rat-running reduction are accurate for Cowley?
Is the ExA satisfied that rat-running will be reduced if Cowley Lane is a main point of access foe the A417?

Pictures 1-3
Blind sharp bend on Cowley Lane inbetween Stockwell and Cowley. Vehicles frequently overshoot the bend and drive through the fence and into the field.
An example of why Cowley Lane cannot support the proposed increase in traffic.

Pictures 4-6 Showing the narrow blind bend in the centre of the village. This is a dangerous bend and the Parish Council have had to purchase traffic cones to put on it to stop vehicles parking here.

Picture 7
An example of traffic unsuitable for Cowley Lane - getting stuck trying to turn around earlier last week

Picture 8
An example of how a horse rider had to pull her horse up onto a high verge in order for a car to pass this weekend