

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

The Highways Agency has identified 3 possible routes for a new Oxford to Cambridge Expressway –

1. A route from the A34 (Chilton or North Abingdon) to Thame Aylesbury and Milton Keynes
2. A route providing an A34 Oxford bypass and linking into the new road at a new Motorway Junction – 9a near Boarstall or Merton on Otmoor then aligning with the Oxford to Cambridge rail line through Calvert to Winslow
3. A route following broadly the A421 Buckingham road to Milton Keynes, with a connection point by the Stratton Audley turn
4. At the same time it is proposed that the Bicester – Oxford train line will be extended to Milton Keynes and the on to Cambridge.

Process

The Autumn budget provided funding support for the initial appraisal stages of planning for an Oxford to Cambridge Expressway, on the basis that there is a good business case for providing the road, and , as an average commuter is prepared to make a journey of about 45 minutes, the road would open up a broader hinterland for both Oxford and Cambridge for commuters (and also for extra housing provision).

The Highways Agency have confirmed that, although they presented costed routes to the Treasury for business case approval, now they are moving onto detailed design of the route they are looking at all options. The Highways England Engagement process, with the Highways Agency, DfT and Jacobs (the Engagement contractors for Highways) will start consulting on the Expressway and Growth Corridor project between 1st December and 1st March 2018, and thereafter again in July when they publish their phase 1 findings. Groups are currently pressing for a Public Inquiry into the proposed routes, to ensure that the selection process is as transparent as possible; if there is a Public Inquiry , all interested parties will be able to register to speak.

Issues

1. OCC are looking at providing a new bridge across the Thames and a relief road for the A415 as part of the Didcot garden town project. The new road would currently funnel all traffic into Nuneham Courtney, so there may be a move to join the new road into the expressway to Thame and build a new town near great Milton (just off the M40). An application was submitted for this but refused.
2. Aylesbury has asked for the expressway to pass close to the town as it believes it would be a benefit to its development – which would suggest that options 1 or 2 would be preferable.
3. Rumour suggests that OCC prefer a northern route as this would help solve some of the problems on the A34 around Oxford – but no route will propose compulsorily purchasing 400 or so houses around Botley.

Proposed action

I suggest the Parish Council writes to CDC to ask for confirmation that to ask that it be kept fully informed as matters develop, with an expectation that, if the Parish is affected, it will be able to hold direct talks with the Highways Agency about route proposals.