

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

**Green Party Member of the European Parliament
for the South East of the UK**

John Hamilton
Oxfordshire County Council
Speedwell House
Speedwell Street
Oxford OX1 1NE

November 19th 2004

Dear Mr Hamilton,

Ref: App no: W16/04

I am writing to express my objections to the above planning application which I am opposed to for a number of reasons.

Firstly the proposed route for the Cogges Link Road would cause severe environmental damage to the Windrush valley and to Cogges Hill. The Windrush valley is an ecologically diverse area that has benefited in recent years from efforts to enhance its natural beauty and enable local people to enjoy its peace and tranquillity. The proposals would result in much of this excellent work being undone and the Council for the Protection of Rural England have expressed serious concerns about the Cogges Link Road development. Furthermore Government policy makes '*a strong presumption against schemes that would significantly affect environmentally sensitive sites, or important species, habitats or landscapes*' and I am certain that the Windrush valley would qualify as such a site.

Secondly, the proposal will not take through traffic away from the town centre. Rather it will direct even more traffic away from Bridge Street into the already congested Station Lane, exacerbating the problems there. Expenditure of £14m on a relief road that will only move the traffic problem elsewhere seems impractical and ill thought through. Not least because there are far better solutions to Witney's traffic problems that I do not feel have been given due consideration. Modifying the Shores Green junction on the A40 to make it a full 4 way junction by adding two west facing slip roads would enable traffic approaching from the north to proceed in other directions without coming through Witney town centre. This would relieve both Bridge Street and Station Lane, as would a Newland Link. Neither of these alternatives have been fully explored and this is the third point in my objection to the plans.

Lastly, I do not believe that more cost effective and less damaging measures to reduce car usage and encourage modal shift have been explored. These alternatives might include improving public transport and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, the development of work and school based travel plans and exploring road-user charges.

I understand that a similar proposal was rejected in 2002 following Secretary of State John Prescott's intervention, so I am copying this letter to the Minister. I urge you to look at less environmentally damaging and more effective ways of alleviating Witney's traffic problems and to guarantee that £14m of government funds will not be spent on this proposal as it stands.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for South East England

cc. Ian Morrow, Head of Planning, West Oxford District Council
Rt Hon John Prescott MP

From time to time Caroline Lucas MEP sends out information by email to keep people informed of their work. If you would like to receive these updates please email carolinelucas@greenmeps.org.uk, putting the word INFO in the subject line, or if you are not online please write to us at the address below.

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