



THE FRIENDS OF
**ABINGDON
CIVIC SOCIETY**

To help preserve what is best worth retaining amongst its old buildings and to encourage new building worthy of its civic traditions and character

38 Mattock Way
Abingdon-on-Thames
Oxfordshire,
OX14 2PQ

29 April 2020

Re: Consultation on new river crossing, Didcot and surrounding area infrastructure

It is the opinion of The Friends of Abingdon Civic Society that this plan will result in increased traffic on the A415 through Abingdon, thus exacerbating the queuing on Abingdon Bridge which is already a serious bottleneck. This will inevitably result in further deterioration of the air quality in Abingdon town centre which is already poor, particularly in Ock Street which is an Air Quality Action Area. Action should be taken to reduce traffic through Abingdon, not increase it.

We are not making specific comments on other aspects of the scheme, but question the whole approach. The full effects of the corona virus pandemic are currently unknown, but it is abundantly clear that there will have to be a rethink of many plans which appeared viable at the beginning of 2020. Large-scale infrastructure projects, such as this one, will not be justifiable. The approach adopted here (building roads to solve traffic congestion) was already discredited/outdated, and is now further undermined by the likelihood of changes in travel patterns, the impact on air quality, and the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions. It is recognised that poor air quality, principally due to vehicle emissions, leads to serious respiratory diseases, resulting in many excess and premature deaths and now a greater risk of severe Covid-19 infection. This is the reason why London and other UK cities have already introduced, or are about to introduce, Low Emission Zones. For example, in Europe, Copenhagen has actively and successfully planned for and installed mass cycling infrastructure to replace car transport.

The whole pattern of life may change as a result of this pandemic, and until it becomes clear what sort of infrastructure, particularly transport, will be required in the

'new normal' it is pointless to continue with planning based on pre-pandemic data. Therefore there is no point to this consultation and it should be abandoned, or at least paused, until it is clear what is needed in the post-pandemic world.

Roberta Nichols

Planning Trustee

Friends of Abingdon Civic Society