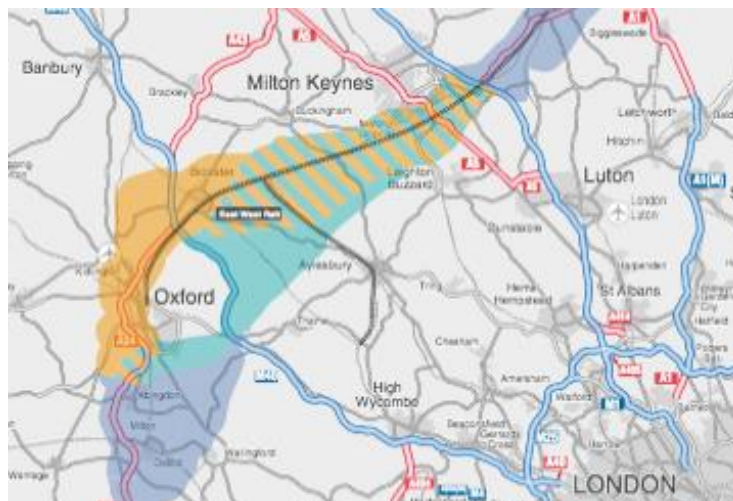


The proposed Oxford - Cambridge Expressway

**Result of a consultation
with the residents of
the village of Chearsley**



9th October 2019

1. Background:

Following receipt of information in recent months on a proposal to construct an Oxford – Cambridge Expressway, with significant potential impacts on the community of Chearsley, the Parish Council decided to carry out a formal consultation with residents to help shape its response to the relevant authorities during the period of consultation.

During the first week in September, a leaflet outlining the background to the planned development and a short questionnaire were delivered to every home in the village, currently numbering around 230 households.

Residents were also given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire online via SurveyMonkey, with the link published on the village website, Chearsley BlogSpot

A copy of the leaflet and the questionnaire itself are contained in the two Appendices to this report.

The leaflet contained information on the proposals for the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, to encourage those unaware of the detail of the proposed development to familiarise themselves with the background, before completing the survey. The information included weblinks to the main organisations seeking to implement a new strategy for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc as well as the main campaign groups seeking to oppose the developments.

In addition, a meeting to brief residents on the planning for the new Expressway was held in the Village Hall on Monday 9th September.

A total of 103 responses were received by the deadline of Friday 13th September, representing around a quarter of the adult population of the village (around 400 persons).

61 questionnaires were completed using the copies distributed to homes in the village and the remaining 42 responses were received online.

2.Results

Question 1:

Do you support the declared aims of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc?

Yes: 16.5%

No: 77.7%

Don't know: 5.8%

Comment:

There was a clear majority opposing the declared aims of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

Question 2.

What is your view on the proposed corridors for the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway?

B1 Corridor

Support: 23.5%

Object: 66.5%

Don't know: None

B3 Corridor

Support: 2.0%

Object: 98.0%

Don't know: None

Comment:

Unsurprisingly, given the lack of support for the declared aims of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, there was strong opposition to both of the corridors currently being considered by Highways England and total rejection of the B3 corridor, whose southern boundary runs a few miles to the North of Chearsley Village.

Question 3.

What position should the Parish council take on the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway?

*The Parish Council should oppose the building of a new Expressway road in conjunction with significant additional development of new housing: **79.5%***

*The Parish Council should support the building of a new Expressway road in conjunction with significant additional development of new housing: **0.9%***

*The Parish Council should delay taking a formal position on the building of a new Expressway road through Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, in conjunction with significant additional development of new housing, until more specific details of the proposals become available: **19.6%***

Comment:

The words of the final question in the survey were carefully chosen to emphasize that the construction of the Expressway would be accompanied by significant development of new housing in areas adjacent to the new road.

Nearly 80% of respondents called on their Parish Council to oppose the building of the new Expressway with the requirement for local areas to take on the significant development of new housing.

However, nearly 20% of respondents suggested that the Parish Council should await further details before finalising its position. There was just a single response calling on the Parish Council to support the new plans.

3. Discussion

Respondents were given the opportunity to back up their answers with further comment and many chose to do so.

The following verbatim comments summarise the main concerns expressed by the clear majority of residents, who are opposed to the proposed building of the new Expressway and additional housing.

“The proposed increase in population, housing and traffic will significantly detract from the beauty, uniqueness and cultural significance of the area.”

“We do not need road-based development in the South. Really just a glorified M25 relief road for negligible local traffic between Cambridge-Oxford. Any jobs will be low value/productivity warehouse jobs rather than proper industry. Should be investing to develop and create wealth/prosperity in the North where it is most required.”

“There is absolutely no sensible reason for additional roads prior to our existing roads being totally rebuilt rather than being patched up.”

“Totally inappropriate proposals for a rural community such as this and they should be resisted completely. There might be the necessity to upgrade existing road infrastructure but the idea that there should be 65,000 homes in the area is totally unacceptable and not appropriate.”

“I support the East-West railway and the AVDC plans for local development. However, the Expressway seems a Trojan Horse to build far more houses compared with other parts of the country and will destroy the limited and precious AONB (Area of Natural Beauty) and hardly help achieve carbon neutrality. What is needed in Bucks is far better superspeed broadband to enable rural communities to work effectively from home without travelling. We suffer enough from heavy lorries and speeding cars as it is.”

4. Conclusion

The Parish Council considered the results of this survey at its meeting on 16th September. Although around c.20% of respondents suggested that the council should await further details before deciding its approach, because such an overwhelming majority (c.80%) urged the council to oppose these developments, it was agreed that it should adopt a formal position of opposing the plans for building an Oxford-Cambridge Expressway.

The Parish Council will now finalise a detailed plan for communicating this decision to relevant organisations and contacts from the local and national political spheres and will use the results of this survey to support the position adopted.

Appendix 1: Leaflet

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway

In recent months, more detailed information has become available on government plans for the development of the 'Oxford-Cambridge Arc', with a stated aim of helping bring growth and greater prosperity to the area identified as 'England's Economic Heartland'.

The following projects are under consideration:

An Oxford to Cambridge Rail Link

The western section, from Oxford to Bedford, will mainly involve upgrading and reinstating existing rail alignments but the Eastern section, from Bedford to Cambridge, will involve construction of new rail lines. It is expected that the new Oxford to Cambridge rail link will become fully operational in the mid-2020s.

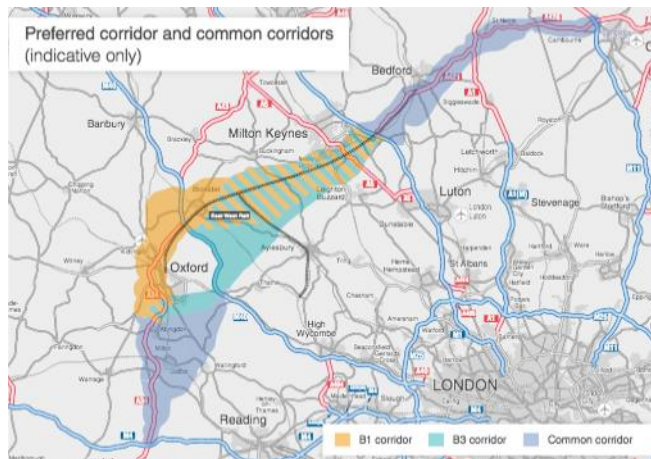
An Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

This will involve significant construction of new roads through rural areas in the western section from Oxford to Milton Keynes, the M1 and Bedford. If the Expressway goes ahead, it will be accompanied by plans to open up large tracts of land for housing development.

Highways England have already been engaged in detailed planning for a route since 2017 and last year they identified two preferred corridors, through which the Expressway would run, from a number of options.

A northerly B1 Corridor runs from the west of the City of Oxford close to Bicester and beyond, while a southerly B3 Corridor runs from the east of the City of Oxford and its southern boundary is a few miles to the north of the village of Chearsley.

The two corridors are identified on this Highways England map



Appendix 1: continued

Highways England have advised that they will announce further information on their preferred corridor and route during this autumn and put their proposals out for public consultation

'East of Oakley'

It recently became known that, among the areas considered by the planners for major housing development adjacent to the new Expressway, an area called 'East of Oakley' has been identified with the potential to accommodate nearly 65,000 new homes, again just a few miles from the village of Chearsley.

The plans for the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, accompanied by a massive development of new housing, will have major implications for our community.

The Parish Council has already passed on the information it has managed to obtain on the progress of planning of these major infrastructure projects to the community and is keen to protect the interest of the residents of Chearsley as best it can

You may wish to do your own research on the progress of these plans, and we can recommend accessing the following websites, representing a number of campaigning groups and government bodies, to obtain more detailed information.

The No Expressway Group

<https://www.noexpressway.org/>

The No Expressway Alliance

<https://www.noexpresswayalliance.org/>

The Expressway Action Group

<https://www.expresswayactiongroup.com/>

National Infrastructure Commission

<https://www.nic.org.uk/our-work/growth-arc/>

Highways England

<http://assets.highwaysengland.co.uk/roads/road-projects/Oxford+to+Cambridge+expressway/Oxford+to+Cambridge+Expressway+Corridor+overview+booklet.pdf>

England's Economic Heartland

<http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Pages/home.aspx>

Appendix 1: continued

The Parish Council will also be holding an Oxford-Cambridge Expressway village meeting:

Date: Monday 9th September

Venue: The Village Hall

Timing: 19.30 – 21.30

Professor David Rogers of the 'No Expressway Group' has already accepted our invitation to make a presentation to our meeting and we will also be asking other speakers to join us to present their own perspectives on the Expressway and related issues

The Parish Council will also be carrying out a formal consultation with our community in the weeks ahead.

We would ask all Chearsley residents to answer the questions below and return a copy of their completed form to Councillor, John Howard.

Please return your completed form no later than Friday 13th September

Either by email to John Howard jnh@dbmc.co.uk

Or delivered to John Howard, Great Barn, School Lane, Chearsley

This deadline has been set to enable the Parish Council to consider the responses at their next meeting on Monday 16th September and, if possible, develop its public position on the Oxford Expressway project, to inform all future representations it makes to relevant local and national bodies.

Thank you in anticipation

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway Questionnaire

1. Do you support the declared aims of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc?

Yes

No

Don't know

2. What is your view on the proposed corridors for the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway?

B1 Corridor

B3 Corridor

Support

Support

Object

Object

Don't know

Don't know

3. What position should the Parish council take on the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway? Please tick one box only.

The Parish Council should oppose the building of a new Expressway road in conjunction with significant additional development of new housing.

The Parish Council should support the building of a new Expressway road in conjunction with significant additional development of new housing.

The Parish Council should delay taking a formal position on the building of a new Expressway road through Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, in conjunction with significant additional development of new housing, until more specific details of the proposals become available.

Name:

Address:

Date:

Signed:

If you have any further comments please write overleaf.