

# Robert Courts MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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Improving the A40

FREEPOST

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday, 3 January 2019

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

## **A40 Consultation Response January 2019**

Tackling the blight of congestion on the A40 is unquestionably one of the top priorities for residents of West Oxfordshire. Sitting in traffic on the A40 is not only frustrating and demoralising for commuters, but it is a significant economic burden for businesses. It is therefore absolutely essential that a long-term solution to this issue is found.

I therefore welcome Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) proposals, which represent probably the biggest step forward on A40 congestion in a generation. We are going to see real change and significant progress on an issue that affects all our day-to-day lives. However, whilst welcoming these proposals, I would suggest that it is probably uncontentious that this scheme is unlikely to offer a final fix alone and in its own right, and moreover that it ought not to be viewed in isolation from other steps that will need to be taken. Whilst welcoming this plan as a significant step forward, I recognise it is likely that work will need to continue to alleviate the problem of congestion on the A40.

I commend OCC for placing a clear emphasis on improving public transport along the A40. It is important to recognise that it is not only in everyone's interests to ensure that as many people as possible find that they no longer need to use a car, but that this public transport solution was a requirement in order for OCC's bid for funding from the Department for Transport's Local Growth Fund to be successful.

These proposals offer a significant step in the right direction, towards an integrated transport network serving West Oxfordshire.

This integrated transport network should comprise improved transport systems across our area, which include – but are not limited to – road infrastructure, cycle networks, public transport provision and rail transport. The proposals to improve the A40 Corridor, as have been laid out by OCC, mark an important step towards this integrated transport network.

**In response to Q1 – 3**, a Park & Ride, in particular, will help to deliver a much-needed upgrade to public transport provision on this route. Those wanting to access Oxford will make good use of a well-designed Park & Ride, and we have seen the success of this type of service at the Pear Tree and Redbridge sites. **In response to Q3 in particular**, some constituents have contacted me to raise concerns about the efficiency of the proposed services at this Park & Ride, as well as its location, with some feeling that a Park & Ride would be better-placed in or immediately outside Witney rather than Eynsham. Equally, many point to the proximity of the Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village as being in the proposed location's favour.

*From the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Witney in West Oxfordshire  
including Bampton, Burford, Carterton, Charlbury, Chipping Norton, Eynsham, Witney and Woodstock.*



With particular relevance to **Q4 – 5**, I welcome plans for a bus lane, and would want to see this in place *before* services begin at the Park & Ride, and *both* in place as soon as possible to ensure that this vital infrastructure is operational *before* homes at the Garden Village are occupied. I would ask that the maximum possible cycling provision be allowed for within the space constraint and cost bracket available.

**In response to Q6 and Q13 - 16**, the proposed cycling infrastructure improvements will greatly benefit those wanting to access Oxford, especially those looking for a cheaper and greener way to travel this short distance. As a keen cyclist and a member of Cycling UK as well as the All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group, I fully support the scheme's proposals to improve cycling infrastructure; having previously been a regular cyclist along the A44 as part of my commute into Oxford, I am fully aware of the high standard of provision along that route and how helpful this would be for it to be replicated along the A40.

Plans for the B4044 Community Path and A40 Cycle Path are especially encouraging, and will help to incentivise those who wish to trade four wheels for two. The B4044 Community Path, in particular, is something I have campaigned for continuously from the start of my time as an MP, and I am pleased to see the firm proposals to create this path.

Similarly, I welcome the proposed link from the A40 cycle lane to the National Route 5 on the Oxford Canal tow path in the interests of an integrated transport network, although would observe that the surface of the latter will require significant improvement if such a link is to be of noticeable benefit.

However I am aware from their communications that there are many West Oxfordshire residents who will have to use their cars in any event. Many use the A40 to access places outside of Oxford city itself – such as hospitals, science parks, schools and businesses – journeys for which there is no direct public transport alternative and for whom, realistically, a car is always likely to be an attractive option.

The same is true for those who use the A40 to access the M40 towards London, or the A34 towards Bicester or Didcot. West Oxfordshire is home to a large number of businesses that rely on local road infrastructure and the links we have to major motorways for the shipment of products – a need which will continue to increase as these businesses grow.

These constituents and businesses will not benefit directly from improved public transport to and from Oxford, nor will they benefit directly from improved cycling infrastructure. It is therefore important that any traffic alleviation proposals do not place too much of an emphasis simply on access to and from Oxford. For this reason, I support this plan which features improved public transport and cycling options intended to take cars off the A40, whilst at the same time improving that road's traffic flow.

**In response to Q7 – 8**, I support the proposals for the A40 dualling, as it is a step forward for this stretch of the road. However, I am aware from correspondence with constituents that there is a widely-held opinion that this partial dualling does not go far enough, and a full-length dual carriageway would be preferred to partial dualling, with bus lane options potentially seen in isolation. In the long-term, I would ask that a plan for dualling the remainder of the road all the way up to the Wolvercote Roundabout at a later stage is still considered for feasibility and cost purposes.



**In response to Q 7 – 12**, I would highlight that the dualling and addition of the A40 Bus Lane would lead to an essential widening of the road, which will open up further opportunities for congestion-relief improvements further down the line, if required.

There will also be an important supporting role that will be played by West Oxfordshire's railways and I would observe that the bus infrastructure here should be viewed in partnership with rail. As many constituents have raised with me, although rail transport does not have a direct role in the A40 Corridor, we must make the most efficient use of rail transport as part of an integrated transport network. It is well-known that we need more efficient services along the Cotswold Line, and Oxford Parkway is sometimes the preferred station for those wishing to travel to London and elsewhere, so access here is important. I will continue to campaign for the reopening of the Cowley Branch for passengers and for redoubling of the remaining sections of the Cotswolds Line. This would allow more frequent trains, and another alternative for those wishing to travel to Oxford, and will again help to take more cars off our roads. For the purposes of this consultation, I would merely ask that consideration is given to any infrastructure that will facilitate good links between road, bus and Hanborough rail station.

I must stress how important it is that this work begins as soon as possible. Congestion on the A40 is a problem that has persisted for decades, and it is imperative that these necessary infrastructure upgrades come into place ahead of the construction of new homes at sites such as the Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village, as well as new developments in places such as Eynsham and Witney.

Furthermore, additional work will be required to access the A40 at crucial points near Witney and Carterton, in particular. Improved and increased access roads will greatly benefit those who live in more rural areas in West Oxfordshire, and will help ensure a more fluid movement of vehicles joining and exiting this route.

Overall, I welcome the proposals laid out in this scheme, which will not only offer a great benefit in traffic alleviation in their own right, but represent a great starting point for any further improvements that are required. I am pleased that we are close to securing this funding, and am keen to work on further plans to bring in more of the funding we need from central government, such as through proposals to create a Major Road Network (MRN), which follow my discussion with the Transport Secretary when I invited him down to see the A40 first-hand. I look forward to considering the finalised outline for the MRN in detail, and to working with OCC on future bids for funding through the MRN, the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and others.

The proposals in this scheme comprise a significant step in the right direction towards improving the A40 Corridor, and I will continue to work constructively with everyone to establish a clear and co-ordinated plan for West Oxfordshire's transport that is deliverable, effective and which ensures we have a transport system fit for the future.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information about any of the issues I have raised.

Yours sincerely,

**Robert Courts MP**