

Cogges Link Road Non Technical Summary



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Highways

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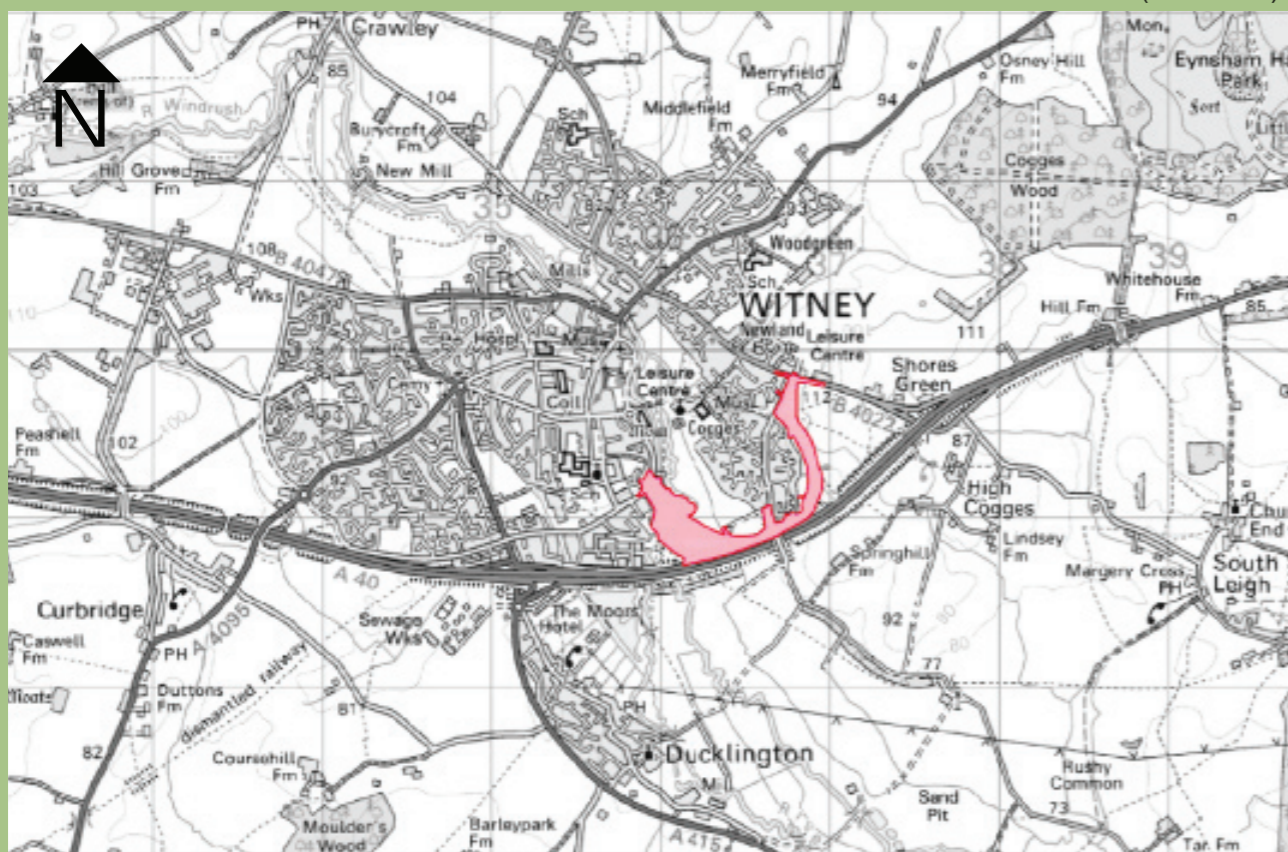
Introduction

Oxfordshire Highways is proposing to build a new link road around the south-eastern edge of Witney in order to ease congestion and improve air quality. The Cogges Link Road would connect Witan Way (south of the town centre) to the Oxford Hill junction with Jubilee Way (on the eastern outskirts of the town). The road would run to the south east of the Cogges residential area, and form a second river crossing over the River Windrush. It would provide a valued link between the north and east sides of the town and the A40 west of Witney, whilst avoiding the need to travel through the town centre.

The proposal would improve the town centre environment by reducing the amount of traffic, particularly in Bridge Street which is used by around 30,000 vehicles per day. Provision of an additional river crossing would enable traffic management measures to be implemented in Bridge Street to further reduce traffic movements through this sensitive corridor, which is part of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and within a Conservation Area.

It is recognised that the proposed scheme would have some environmental effects on the surrounding area. An Environmental Statement has therefore been prepared which identifies what the impacts would be and how any adverse effects would be dealt with by means of appropriate mitigation measures. It also shows where enhancement can be provided as part of the scheme.

Scheme Location (not to scale)



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Background Information

Planning permission was granted for the Cogges Link Road in 1997 but the scheme was not started within the required period due to funding issues. A further planning application was submitted in 2004 but this was withdrawn pending the outcome of an Inquiry into the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, where the scheme was specifically noted as a part of a future strategy for the local highway network.

The Inspector's Report into the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (adopted in June 2006) recommended that the route of the Cogges Link Road should continue to be safeguarded on the Local Plan map but that the scheme should not be pursued until the alternative option of additional slip roads at Shores Green had been fully evaluated. There was also criticism over the relative lack of measures to overcome environmental impacts on the country park. These issues have now been assessed and resolved and are dealt with as part of the new planning application.

Planning Policy

Cogges Link Road forms a critical part of the planned highway network for Witney as set out in the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP). The route is safeguarded in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. The aim of the scheme is to relieve town centre congestion and improve air quality, and meet the needs arising from current and future development around the town. Cogges Link Road would connect with the recently constructed Jubilee Way completing a route south of the town centre reducing traffic in Bridge Street, the Conservation Area and the town centre itself.

Cogges Link Road supports the LTP objectives by:

- (a) **Tackling Congestion** - by providing relief to Bridge Street, the scheme would reduce traffic congestion along this corridor and in the town centre.
- (b) **Delivering Accessibility** - by reducing congestion, public transport services would have better access to the town centre, thereby improving journey times and increasing reliability. The reduction of traffic in the town centre would allow the installation of a range of complementary measures which would also improve access.
- (c) **Safer Roads** - traffic modelling demonstrates that the implementation of the Cogges Link Road would result in fewer accidents. The town centre would be a safer place and a more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- (d) **Better Air Quality** - by reducing traffic and congestion, the Cogges Link Road would improve air quality, a priority in the designated AQMA.
- (e) **Improving the Street Environment** - reducing traffic in the town centre would allow complementary measures to go ahead, improving the street environment for the residents of Witney.



The Existing Environment

The new road would affect mostly open land to the south and east of the Cogges residential area. This area is divided into the historic floodplain of the River Windrush to the south west of Cogges and the higher ground of Cogges Hill east of Cogges. The area supports a variety of animal, bird, reptile and aquatic life.

The land is mainly agricultural with some public open space consisting of the country park between the two branches of the Windrush and a smaller public open space area immediately to the east of the Stanton Harcourt Road between Cogges and the A40.

The Cogges Link Road Proposal

The proposed road would be a 1.1 mile (1.8km) long single lane two-way road with a 40mph speed limit. There would be a 3m wide footway and cycleway on the north side between Witan Way and Stanton Harcourt Road, linking Cogges to the town. From Witan Way south eastwards the road would cross the historic floodplain on an embankment with bridges over the two branches of the River Windrush. The Farm Mill stream and minor water channels would be placed in pipes under the new road embankment. The road would pass beneath a new bridge carrying the Stanton Harcourt Road and then climb steadily northwards, partly in cutting, to end at the existing traffic signal controlled junction with Oxford Hill and Jubilee Way. Access to Cogges Hill Road would be provided by a signal controlled T-junction on the Cogges Link Road, about 100m south of the Oxford Hill signals. A number of footpaths would be diverted to the east of Cogges and within the country park.

To reduce noise and visual impacts, an earth bank would be provided between the road and properties on the eastern margins of Cogges. Extensive planting along the length of the road would reduce visual impacts and restore wildlife corridors. Animal tunnels and bridges with shelves would be built to enable wildlife to find a way to safely cross the road and fences would guide wildlife to these locations.





















A replacement area for the lost public open space would be provided to the north east between Cogges and the new road. Although the scheme crosses the historic floodplain of the River Windrush, detailed flood studies taking account of the extent of the flooding in 2007, have shown that the actual floodplain for the river would be only marginally affected by the scheme. Flood compensation will be provided within the scheme footprint. Drainage running off the new road and existing surface water flows crossed by the route would be carried by new ditches and piped drains. A water storage lagoon and other measures would limit the flow of water into existing drainage systems to the rate at which it flows off the land at the moment to minimise the risk of flooding. The drainage lagoon would be sensitively designed to blend with the local landscape and provide biodiversity value. Pollution interceptors would maintain the quality of the water reaching existing water courses.

An area of land to the east of the Windrush would compensate the loss of part of the country park, with a new car park accessed from the Cogges Link Road. A new footbridge would connect this area to the existing country park. Other enhancements to the country park include planting of new habitat such as wetland areas and reed beds.

Overall the current proposal is similar to the scheme permitted in 1997 except that:

- The roundabout originally planned linking Cogges Link Road and Stanton Harcourt Road has been removed.
- The water storage lagoon has been relocated to the south of the Cogges Link Road.
- Street lighting has been restricted to the junctions at each end due to concerns about light pollution.
- The scheme has been further developed to ensure all environmental impacts are mitigated, including the transfer of land to the country park and associated enhancements as described above.

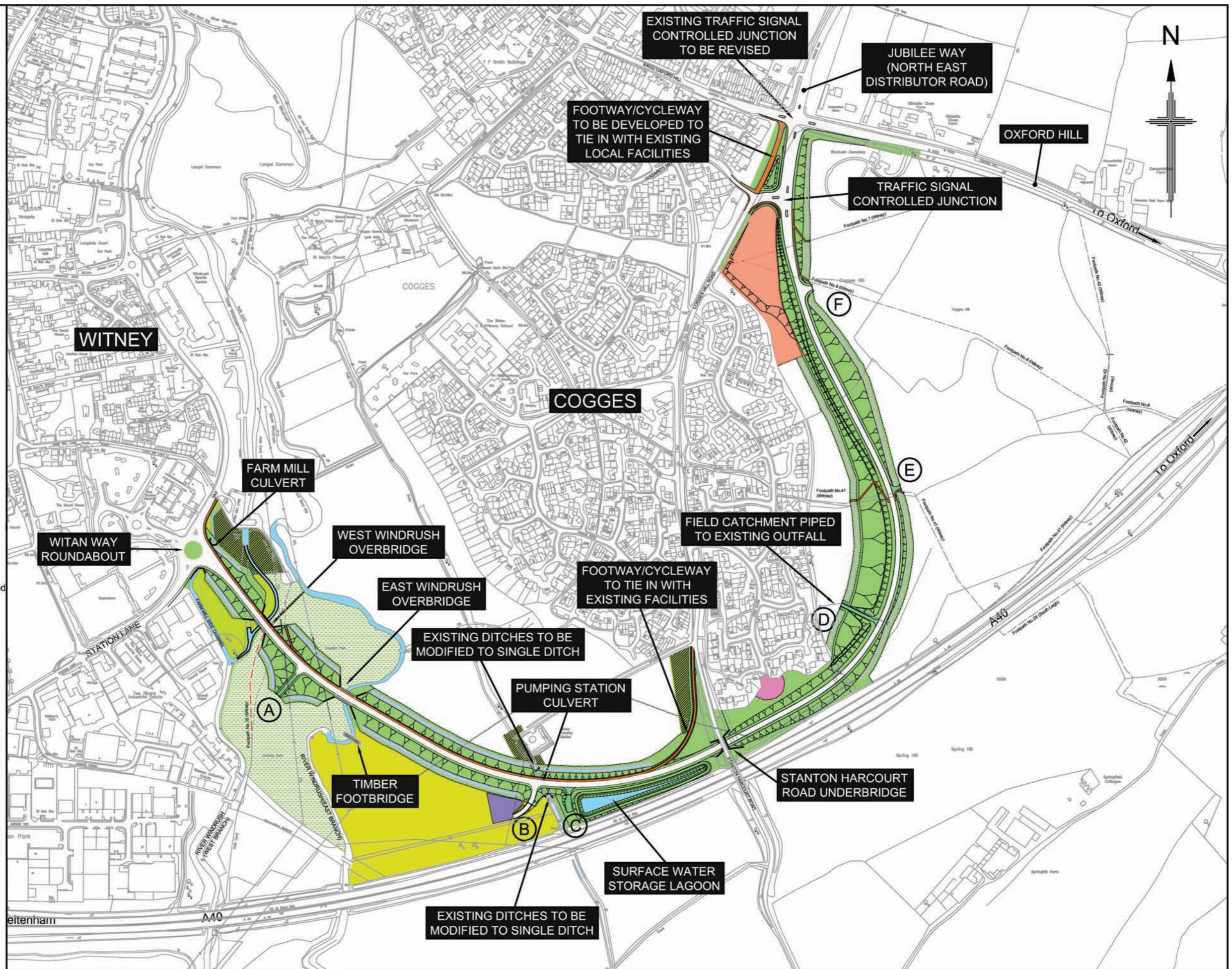
LEGEND

-  Temporary access to be returned to land owner after remediation
-  Soft landscape treatment on other highway land sympathetic with existing vegetation
-  Soft landscape treatment within highway boundary
-  Replacement area of Public Open Space
-  Retained area of Public Open Space
-  Country Park compensation land
-  Parking for Country Park
-  Areas of Grasscrete
-  Landscape and biodiversity mitigation within Country Park
-  Swale
-  Ditch
-  Surfaced paths & cycleways
-  Public footpaths
-  Public footpath diversion
-  Public footpaths stopped up
-  Existing overhead cables to be diverted underground
-  Existing highway boundary fence
-  Vehicular Access Point
-  Gate
-  Highway boundary fence

SCHEDULE OF VEHICULAR ACCESS

A	Management of Country Park
B	Country Park Car Park and management of Country Park
C	Maintenance of surface water lagoon
D	Agricultural purposes - NB to be deleted in the event that planning permission is granted for development of land identified in West Oxfordshire Local Plan
E	Agricultural purposes
F	Agricultural purposes and new access to Windrush Cemetery (subject to planning permission)

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Cogges Link Road- Scheme Layout Plan *(not to scale)*

Consideration of Alternative Schemes

Several possible alternatives to the Cogges Link Road have been previously considered, including:

- **Shores Green Interchange** – adding west facing slip roads to the A40
- Council for the Protection of Rural England Route – a link from near Shores Green Interchange, running next to the A40 to Sainsbury's Roundabout on Witan Way
- **Newland Link** – a route between Newland and Witan Way
- **West End Link Phase 2 (North)** – between Mill Street and West End
- **Do Minimum** – optimisation of signal timings at key junctions plus the addition of a junction at A40/Downs Road in future modelling

All the alternatives and the Cogges Link Road have been compared in terms of how well they achieve the scheme objectives, particularly reducing traffic in Witney town centre, the Conservation Area and the AQMA and whether they are feasible to build. This process is described in detail in the Environmental Statement. The Cogges Link Road outperforms all the alternatives.



Environmental Effects and Measures to Reduce Impact

All land would need to be obtained through a Compulsory Purchase Order. Some of it is public open space and country park for which compensation land has been defined. The environmental assessment has comprehensively and systematically identified the environmental effects of the Cogges Link Road. These have been taken into account in the scheme design, which includes measures to mitigate impacts and to integrate the new road into its surroundings. Key effects and mitigation may be summarised as follows on the next page. Some measures will take time to become effective.

ENVIRONMENTAL TOPIC	MITIGATION AND RESIDUAL IMPACTS
Air Quality	There would be a substantial reduction in the size of the AQMA with the introduction of the proposed scheme, as air quality concentrations significantly reduce within the town centre. Residential properties in Cogges Estate would not experience any adverse impacts to air quality due to the scheme.
Agriculture	Agricultural land would be lost under the footprint of the scheme however compensation would be provided to affected landowners. Severed fields would have new accesses enabling production to continue.
Community Facilities	Some public open space would be lost at the country park and to the south of Cogges. A new recreation area would be created east of Cogges and the country park would be extended east of the Windrush. Access to the country park would be enhanced with a new visitor car park.
Cultural Heritage	Areas of high archaeological potential that are to be crossed would be subject of survey and excavation with works being supervised by an archaeologist where necessary.
Footpaths	Severed footpaths would be diverted and mounding and planting would reduce the visual impacts for people using them.
Geology and Soils	The design would maximise re-use of excavated material however there would be a small amount of unsuitable material to be deposited off site.
Landscape and Visual	Planting would reflect the wetland character of the floodplain whilst new woodland and hedgerows would reinforce the hedged mixed farmland landscape east of Cogges. Sections in cutting, planting and earth mounds would assist in providing visual screening. It would not be possible to screen the road from the country park due to the embankment crossing the flat floodplain.
Noise/Vibration	The introduction of the scheme would reduce noise and vibration levels in properties directly fronting onto the current road network, particularly Bridge Street, Newlands, Oxford Hill and Woodstock Road. Noise levels from the new road would be kept to a minimum through the use of a low noise surface in the construction of the road together with running the road in deep cutting as it borders the Cogges Estate. The scheme design also incorporates the use of extensive earth mounds to further attenuate noise emanating from the road.
Water Quality and Drainage	The scheme design includes use of ditches, swales and a lagoon to limit runoff into the existing drainage systems to the current rates and incorporate pollution control measures.
Wildlife	Loss of habitat and impact on protected species would be minimised through creation of new habitat, particularly within the country park.

Costs

The current estimated total scheme cost including design, supervision, implementation and land acquisition is £16.4m at 2007 prices. The scheme would be funded from developer contributions (£11.8m) and the Local Transport Plan (LTP) (£4.6m). Design and supervision would be carried out by Oxfordshire Highways with construction by a contractor appointed through a competitive tendering process.

Construction Timetable

Assuming a construction start can be made in Spring 2010 the road would be opened in Spring 2012. There would be a need to close Stanton Harcourt Road for the construction of a new bridge carrying the road over Cogges Link Road. This timetable allows for the various stages of the planning process to be followed (as set out below) prior to construction commencing.

What Happens Now?

A planning application has been submitted for Cogges Link Road. The key stages between now and the construction of the road are as follows:

- Oxfordshire County Council will formally consider and consult on the planning application leading to a report to the Planning & Regulation Committee which will decide whether or not to grant planning permission. It is expected that this will take place at the committee meeting scheduled for January 2009. The committee is open to the public and will take place at County Hall, New Road, Oxford.
- A Side Roads Order will be published by Oxfordshire County Council to authorise alterations to existing roads, footpaths and means of access. A Compulsory Purchase Order will also be published for land required for the scheme.
- A Public Inquiry may be necessary depending upon the nature of any objections received to the planning application and/or the Published Orders.
- If planning permission is granted, the result of any Public Inquiry is favourable and permissions to enter land are in place, a contract will be agreed for the construction of the Cogges Link Road.

Members of the public or any organisation wishing to formally comment or to support or object to the planning application would be advised to do so, in writing, by 28 November 2008 by one of the following methods:

- **Letter** - send to Head of Sustainable Development, Oxfordshire County Council, Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, OXFORD. OX1 1NE
- **Fax** - send to 01865 810106 marked F.A.O. Head of Sustainable Development
- **Email** - send to john.hamilton@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- **FREEPOST** - reply slip at the back of this document

Communications should be clearly marked 'Cogges Link Road for attention of John Hamilton'.



Indicative aerial view of the proposed new link road (not to scale)

Obtaining Further Information

1.

A complete set of **Planning Application Documents** including plans and the Environmental Statement can be viewed at the following locations from August 2008 during normal office hours.

- Oxfordshire County Council, County Hall, New Road, OXFORD – 01865 816001
- Oxfordshire County Council, Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, OXFORD – 01865 815700
- West Oxfordshire District Council, District Council Offices, Elmfield, New Yatt Road, WITNEY – 01993 861000
- Witney Town Council, Town Council Offices, Market Square, WITNEY – 01993 704379

2.

For more information please contact the following Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Highways officers:

- Traffic and transportation issues – Jacqui Cox 01865 815713
- Environment & ecology – Jon Mullins 01844 296212
- Engineering and all other issues – Julian Hartless 01865 815097 or – Nigel Day 01844 296200

3.

A full printed hard copy of the **Environmental Statement** documentation is available to purchase from Oxfordshire County Council for £415. A CD version costs £2.

Key documents will also be available on the following websites:

- www.oxfordshire.gov.uk
- www.westoxon.gov.uk

4.

A **Public Exhibition** will be held between the 9th and 11th October 2008 in the Marlborough Hotel on Market Square in Witney. Opening times are as follows:

- Thursday 9th, 13:00 – 20:00 hours
- Friday 10th, 10:00 – 18:00 hours
- Saturday 11th, 10:00 – 13:00 hours

5.

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audiocassette, computer disk and e-mail. Versions in other languages are also available. Please call any of the telephone numbers given above, or 01865 815078, or e-mail tpi@oxfordshire.gov.uk