

## Letter to Robert Courts, our MP, from an Eynsham resident

Dear Mr Courts,

I note from the Oxford Mail (<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17778133.eynsham-hosts-public-meeting-witney-oxford-a40-upgrades/>) that you intend to host an engagement exercise and public meeting on the garden village and A40 'in the near future'.

As such I thought I would share my thoughts from the recent meeting in Eynsham in the hope that they might be helpful.

The panel were there to discuss the delivery of this A40 improvement project - how to address the congestion - on the whole the audience seemed more concerned with discussing how to address the causes of congestion. All seemed agreed on the need to tackle the issues arising from climate change.

This project has been discussed so much that people accept it is going ahead while sceptical about how much it's worthwhile and whether it's a good use of money (how to make the best use of limited resources) but have generally moved on.

There is certainly a perception around lack of joined up thinking, that this is being proposed mainly because that's the only thing they think they can get funding for (and the hope that it can be joined up with future projects), and a general lack of imagination. The panel were given the opportunity to address these issues but, in my opinion, completely failed to address these perceptions - despite having questions in advance.

I think that there is space for a different type of meeting, a citizens assembly perhaps, to think about how to address the problem more strategically.

In my opinion the following would go some way to help people understand the context of the problem and address many of the points made at the meeting:

1. A presentation describing the existing traffic flows based on analysis of ANPR and mobile phone data
  - This is always asked for but has not been delivered satisfactorily although it apparently exists - I could only find information about the traffic within the A40
  - Necessary to help everybody understand the problems in the same context
  - The key point is where the traffic goes after the Wolvercote roundabout
2. A discussion of how to address some of bottlenecks, obviously this depends on the above but could include representatives of some of the following:
  - toll bridge owners - how to increase traffic flow (and their revenue)
  - private schools (St Edwards?) - what can be done to reduce the impact of the school run
  - StageCoach - which other routes might they consider and why they aren't running now e.g. to Headington/Hospitals, what else could be done
  - HGV industry (Chris Hayter?) - this is also a way to partly cover longer distance traffic - what would make the biggest impact for them e.g. A40/A44 link road
  - cyclists (OCN?) - how to encourage modal shift e.g. ebikes
  - railways - what is potentially feasible (freight as well as passenger) and what the blockers are - e.g. it appears fairly straightforward have something joining the main line at Hanborough or Yarnton and going through to Cowley but apparently isn't
  - congestion charging/tolls on the main A40 - encourage people out of their cars and raise revenue to enable other projects

- major employers e.g. Universities - why keep building on congested sites in the city/Headington instead of providing more employment opportunities near the housing; enabling better transport; more home working
3. What to do to make some of this happen
- explanation of how funding works - this seems to put a block on any imaginative projects - to paraphrase "we're doing this because it's the only thing we can get funding for"
  - what can the council(s) do/what are they thinking about - strategic thinking rather than project delivery
  - how to promote more joined up thinking
  - what could be done quickly and cheaply and what requires more long term planning
  - other roadblocks

It also helps to reduce frustration if people can understand why some of the more obvious things can't be done - to know what has been considered and ruled out as well as what might be going forward.

As a member of the Transport Select Committee it would be very helpful if you could help us understand how funding works and why some of potential solutions have to be considered separately rather than as whole e.g. bridge over the A40 vs crossing points, B4044 cycle path, toll bridge, phasing the work when it seems cheaper and more effective to do as a single project - this was the source of considerable frustration at the meeting. Again a real perception that project planning is based around the funding model rather than the most effective solution(s) and that the funding model is outdated and doesn't address issues such as climate change.

I hope this is of some help.

Regards,  
Ian Wright

cc: Gordon Beach, Eynsham Parish Council  
Cllr Charles Matthew  
Dr Raymond Hall, Working with Witney Town Council