

As the March 2018 Partnership meeting was cancelled here is a brief summary of the topics on the Agenda

Pewsham

No update from WBCT

Studley Grange

Canal towpath will be opened at the end of March (as a 'dead end') with the onward linking path to be constructed as soon funding is available.

Swindon Wichelstowe

There is a regular monthly liaison meeting with the Wichelstowe project team

Joint Venture Company

Agreement signed between Barratt Homes and Swindon BC.

Middle Wichel Canalside

Initial works now complete (but running late). Next contract work has started on the canal which will involve piling the towpath edge. Work on Hall & Woodhouse pub (opposite Waitrose) also due to start in March.



Looking north from Waitrose

M4 Crossing

Background

When the M4 was built it severed the route of the Wilts & Berks south of Swindon. The road level means that the proposed new crossing needs to be further west. Swindon BC needs to construct a new road access from Wichelstowe to J16 of M4 which will include a new tunnel under the M4. The original plans have a separate canal and road tunnel but because of changes in road design in 2013 it became technically possible to consider co-sting the road and canal tunnels. WBCT have been making this point to Swindon BC since that time. Last year WBCT formally

The effect on the Wilts & Berks Restoration

The obstruction caused by the M4 has always been one of the key difficulties in public perception of the ability of the Wilts & Berks project to deliver a fully restored canal.

The current possibility to cross the motorway in conjunction with road is probably 'a once in a generation' opportunity to construct the motorway crossing for the canal.

As a major technical challenge if the opportunity is not taken now it threatens the viability of the whole Wilts & Berks scheme.

From this perspective it therefore is of direct relevance to all Partner organisations as a major risk to the restoration.

Current actions

WBCT continue to lobby Swindon BC to reconsider the decision to exclude the canal crossing from Southern Access road tunnel under the M4. A letter to WBCT from the Leader of the Council attached at the end of this summary.

Lord Lansdowne has written on behalf of the Partnership

Robert Buckland MP (South Swindon) has confirmed he will try to arrange a meeting with SBC and Department for Transport.

Canal & River Trust have been providing technical information and informal contact with Highways England (who will adopt the structure when complete)

IWA have written to Cllr Renard.

Partner Action

Partnership Officer is currently making direct contact with all partner representatives to see how they may be able to help.

East Wichel

WBCT continue to investigate cause of low water in the already constructed canal canal.

Two further schemes are planned to get the canal further east to Croft Road

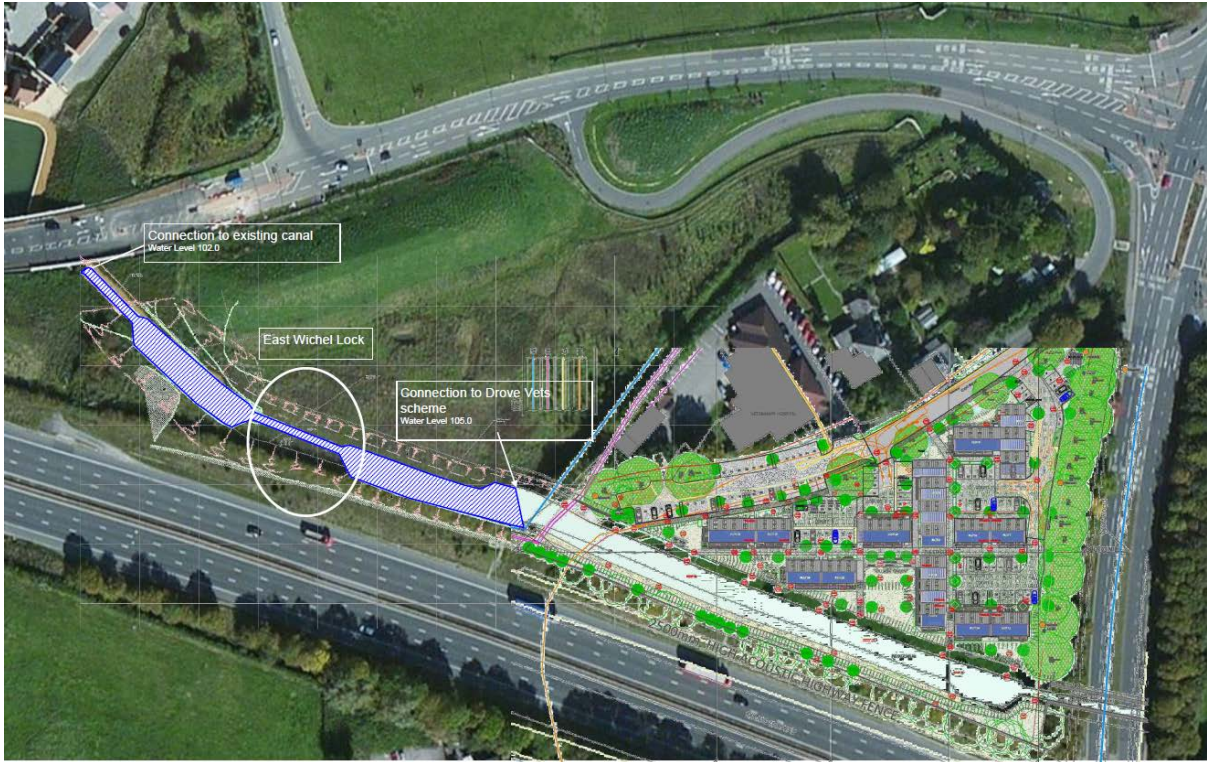
A Pre-app has been submitted to Swindon BC by WBCT for the section from East Wichel to Drove Vets.

A planning consent has been granted for a scheme at the Drove Vets (S/17/0938)

Details of the consent on Swindon BC planning web site

<http://bit.ly/2I3dUww>

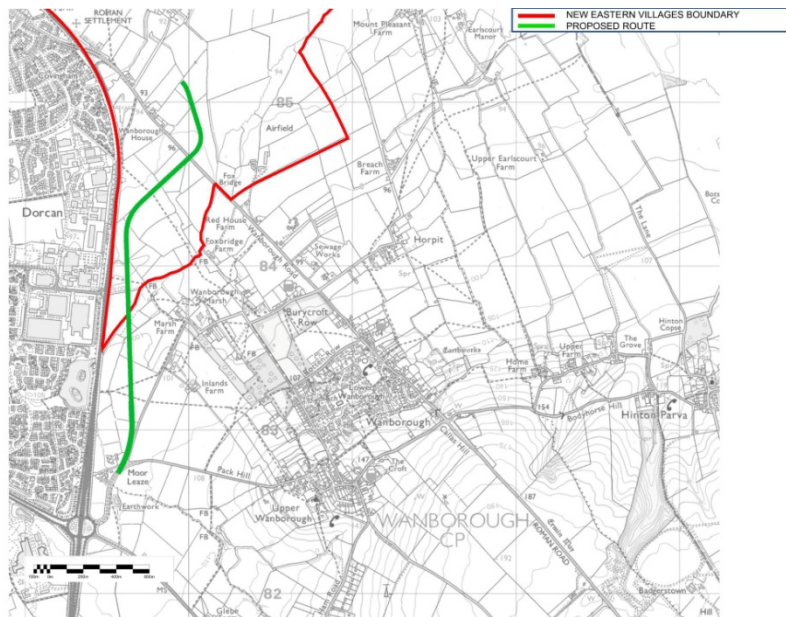
Both schemes are shown on the following drawing:



Swindon New Eastern Villages

Monthly liaison meetings continue.

The current issue is the amendment to the route of the Southern Connector road. WBCT need a confirmed route so that the design for the canal can be completed. It is then intended to apply for planning consent in parallel with the road scheme.





Vale of White Horse DC Local Plan Pt 2

The following email was recently received

This is to advise that on 23 February 2018, Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) submitted the [Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites](#) to the Secretary of State, so that it can be independently examined.

The Local Plan 2031 Part 2 complements the adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (December 2016) by setting out policies and locations for housing to meet the council's proportion of Oxford's unmet housing need. It also includes policies for the part of Didcot Garden Town that lies within the Vale of White Horse District, detailed development management policies to complement the strategic policies as set out in the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Plan and additional site allocations for housing. To view the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 please visit: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/LPP1.

What happens next?

Now that the Part 2 Plan has been submitted, the Secretary of State will appoint a Planning Inspector to carry out the Independent Examination. The Inspector will examine the Part 2 Plan, including the evidence supporting it and the comments received, and will make a decision on whether the plan is "sound" and "legally compliant". For more information please see our [guidance note](#).

To view the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 documents:

VWHDC has also prepared a list of Proposed Additional Modifications, which includes clarification and additional information in the supporting text / document. We hope this will be of assistance to the Inspector. These documents, alongside other core supporting documents, are available for inspection at:

- council offices, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB weekdays from 8.30am until 5pm (4.30pm Fridays)
- www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/LPP2
- public libraries in the district during normal opening hours.

Update Bulletin

Our latest bulletin gives an update on our planning policy work and includes an update on our Local Plan and neighbourhood planning. To access the bulletin click [here](#).

planning.policy@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Kind regards
Adrian Duffield
Head of Planning



Appendix 1

Letter from WBCT and reply from Swindon BC

29 January 2018

Cllr D Renard
Leader
Swindon Borough Council
Civic Offices
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Swindon
SN1 2JH

Dear David

M4 Tunnel/Canal

Further to Susie Kemp's email of 15 January, I agreed that the Trust would formally respond once we had had a chance to consider the matter further.

It goes without saying that we and our partners, in the canal project, are bitterly disappointed with the response from Swindon Borough Council (SBC) and the position that this now leaves us in.

The issue of the canal needing to cross the M4 has been a major strategic issue since the project was first accepted as a viable restoration. I, myself, have been involved in this issue since I was Deputy Leader of the Council in 2005, when it was clear that as tunnel was required for the Wichelstowe development that it made perfect sense, in all manners of way, for the canal to share the same crossing. As you are aware, work on the co-design was done by WSP in 2006.

It is true that this work highlighted technical issues for the canal because of the width required for the original road design. The technical issues could have been easily solved by re-aligning the angle of the road crossing and this was supported by WSP, as a sensible and cost effect option. So the combination of road and canal crossing has been a live issue between SBC and WBCT since that time.

It was, therefore, more than surprising to be told by the Wichelstowe project team, in September 2017, of the funding issue with Department for Transport (DfT) and followed by the comment that WBCT were too late in bringing this matter to the table. Both Ken Oliver and I were left stunned by the comment.

We are very grateful to Susie Kemp for her recent efforts with DfT to try to resolve this but seemingly we are now faced with an impasse.

The question now is how to bring a resolution to this issue, which is deliverable. As things stand, the project is now faced with the prospect of needing a second motorway crossing, where one would have been sufficient. The implications, not least cost, of so doing are likely to be prohibitive. We would question whether Highways England would even countenance a second tunnel in such close proximity?



The inescapable fact, in this whole situation, is that to accommodate the canal in a single tunnel only requires an additional 4 metres to be added to the 13.5 metres required for the road. The marginal cost increase of this 4m is, therefore, a fraction of the cost of a separate tunnel and the work around planning, consents etc are minimal.

As there is still, currently, no approved plan for the road tunnel and construction work is unlikely to start for another 2 years, we, therefore, have concluded that we are not able to accept the current position.

In the short to medium term, with the crossing, we would be very close to being able to connect Royal Wootton Bassett to Swindon. Joining two towns in this way would demonstrate the benefits the canal and associated towpath can bring to the communities and be a showcase for the wider canal restoration to attract the necessary investment.

The Trust has to ask a very fundamental question of the Council; "What was the business case benefits for the Authority to spend upwards of £20m on canal infrastructure in Wichelstowe if they did not see it as part of a wider through navigation connecting the national network?".

So we will now need to take our case to the LEP, Highways England, our MP's along the entire route and we will be requesting a meeting with Department for Transport. We will also be engaging with other important stakeholders and partners, such as Wiltshire Council, Canal & River Trust, Inland Waterways Association, all of whom see this issue as fundamental to the end to end restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal and the eventual completion of the Southern Canals Network.

We feel that the Council has a responsibility to work actively with us to find a resolution and preferably one that does not involve building a second tunnel. WBCT is currently considering applying for its own planning consent for the dual tunnel scheme, to ensure the matter is properly considered.

We ask therefore, for your urgent co-operation and thoughts. We are available to meet at your request.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Bluh
Chairman



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Roderick Bluh
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15 February 2018

DR.sp.RB. Tunnel Under the M4 Motorway 4885

Dear Rod

Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal – Tunnel Under the M4 Motorway

Thank you for your letter dated 29th January, in which you express the disappointment of the Trust to the Council's decision regarding the Wichelstowe Southern Access (WSA). I fully appreciate and understand the Trust's disappointment that it is not feasible, within the timeframe and budget that we are working to, to make provision for the Canal within the proposed tunnel carrying the WSA under the M4.

It is clear that the Government expects the WSA scheme to be delivered by March 2021 to meet with funding deadlines, and it is equally clear that the grant funding that has been provisionally awarded to the Council to deliver the scheme is a finite allocation - no further funding will be made available to us.

I understand that the increase in size of the structure required to accommodate both the WSA and the Canal would result in extra cost of around £4 million. In the absence of any funding being available to meet these additional costs and implications that a change in approach creates for the programme, the Council would not be able to commit to delivering the extended structure by March 2021, and risks losing the provisional funding award that is already available for the scheme.

The approved Masterplan for the Wichelstowe development shows two separate crossing points of the M4, one for the WSA and the second, to the East, for the Canal. This sets the principle of there being two crossings of the M4, and this principle has been accepted by Highways England.

The WSA scheme currently being brought forward can be delivered within the current planning approval, and can therefore be delivered by the March 2021 deadline. If the scheme were to be amended to accommodate the Canal, this would represent a significant departure from the current planning approval, introducing significant planning and delivery risks. A new planning application would need to be prepared, consulted upon and approved which would inevitably impact upon the delivery programme for the scheme, making delivery by the March 2021 very doubtful.

Accommodating the canal also introduces additional complexity to both design and construction phases further impacting on the programme and risks associated with delivery timescales.

Therefore, whilst I acknowledge that there would, on the face of it, be some benefits from incorporating the Canal within the WSA tunnel, the risks to the overall project funding and delivery programme are more significant. As you know, if the WSA is not delivered within these time constraints, there could be significant impact on the Wichelstowe development which, now that the Joint Venture between the Council and Barratt Developments has been formalised, could have a detrimental impact on our ability to deliver the new housing that Swindon needs from this strategic site.

In summary, whilst the Council remains fully supportive of the objectives of the Canal Trust, and will continue to make provision for extending the canal network within Wichelstowe, there is an over-riding need to deliver the WSA by March 2021, thereby facilitating the build out of the Wichelstowe development, which has to take precedence in this case.

I recognise that the Trust has the right to lobby all parties to seek a reconsideration of this issue, and would be happy to participate in any meetings with the Department for Transport or other parties. The Council will also support the Trust in any negotiations with Highways England regarding the Canal crossing in accordance with the adopted Wichelstowe Masterplan and Local Plan.

In the meantime, we will continue with the design and Business Case preparation for the WSA in accordance with the programme that we have to ensure that the scheme is delivered by March 2021.

Yours sincerely



Councillor David Renard
Leader Swindon Borough Council