

Dear Claire

Cold Ashton Roundabout Expansion

Thank you for consulting the Cotswolds Conservation Board regarding this scheme.

The Board has agreed with the Highways Agency (and the majority of highway authorities) "Environmental Guidelines for Highway Works and Management in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty." A copy is attached. The guidelines include principles which should be followed as the design of this scheme is progressed.

With respect to your specific questions I can respond as follows:

Dry stone walls and Hedges

The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of the Cotswolds AONB¹ has identified the site as lying within the High Wold Dip Slope Landscape Character Type (LCT). It is noted in the description of this LCT that "The large fields are separated by stonewalls, some of which are obscured by overgrown regenerating vegetation and hedges, together with neat hedgerows, and post and wire fencing." It is also noted that "Although evident, the dry stone walls are less common than on the High Wold Plateau (LCT)".

The High Wold Dip Slope LCT is a large area forming an arc from West Oxfordshire in the north to south of Bath.

The Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change study published by the Board² indicates that in the 5km square of the AONB where the proposed roundabout is sited, dry stone walls form a high proportion (70-100%) of field boundaries.(see page 66).

The Board considers therefore that drystone walls, and to a lesser extent hedges, form important elements of the local landscape character in the vicinity of the site.

The Board has published a Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for each LCT. For the High Wold Dip Slope LCT the guidelines³ suggest that forces for change include "Road upgrading and improvements, especially of minor country roads, as a result of development or general improvement schemes." Suggested responses to this change include "Conserve the rural character of the local road network", and "Promote use of design and materials."

The field boundaries in the vicinity of the site do exhibit the characteristics as described in the LCA. The Board would therefore wish to see that where existing drystone walls are to be removed they are replaced, including where they are currently overgrown by vegetation,. It should be noted that there are distinctive construction techniques for walls in different parts of the Cotswolds. The Board is able to advise on this issue.

¹ http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/landscape_character_assessment/index.htm

² http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/local_distinctiveness_landscape_change/index.html

³ http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/userfiles/file/Landscape/9.LCT9HIGHWOLDDIP_SLOPEJune08.pdf

Hedging would also be acceptable where replacing existing. The Board would suggest that this is located where most accessible for future maintenance. Post and rail fencing without hedging would not be acceptable.

The Board would also wish consideration to be given to the following:

- a) **Lighting.** If the new roundabout is to be lit, as is presently the case, a design which minimises night time glow from the area should be sought. Lower columns would help in this regard, together with “white” light, rather than orange sodium.
- b) **Signage.** A complete overhaul of the present sign clutter is required. Signs should be of the minimum size appropriate to traffic speeds.
- c) **Design:** The Board would wish to see a “soft” treatment to the roundabout central area.
- d) The **bus shelter** on the westbound carriageway of the A420W will need to be relocated. A design replicating the form and materials of the existing shelter is required. An “off the peg” standard design would not be appropriate.
- e) The **Cotswold Way National Trail** crosses the A46 to both the north (near to the filling station) and to the south at the crossroads. The Board is concerned that improvements to the roundabout will lead to increased traffic speeds, particularly as drivers exit the roundabout on widened carriageways. Whilst signal controlled crossings may not be considered appropriate, the Board would wish to see consideration given to the provision of central refuges, surface treatments and other features to improve pedestrian safety.

Finally, the Board understands that the proposed scheme is intended to reduce peak time congestion at the A46/A420 junction. Currently many drivers attempt to avoid this by using Gorse Lane from the A46 to access the A420W, often to then use Freezinghill Lane en route to Lansdown. Congestion occurs both as vehicles are turning right off the A46 onto Gorse Lane, and even more so as they attempt to cross the A420 at the staggered junction. Use of Gorse Lane as a “rat run” is causing problems of verge erosion and loss of tranquility. The Cotswold Way crosses Gorse Lane, with safety issues for pedestrians.

The Board would therefore suggest that as part of the roundabout scheme, consideration is given to making Gorse Lane one way, northbound. This would therefore remove both the currently hazardous entrances crossing the A46 and onto the A420. Since the roundabout improvement will reduce congestion at the A46/A420 junction, drivers will no longer seek to avoid it by using Gorse Lane southbound.

The Board realises that the Highways Agency is not responsible for Gorse Lane. It would be helpful if this suggestion could be put to Bath and North East Somerset Council. As well as improving highway safety, the introduction of such a proposal would bring benefits to the AONB, offsetting the inevitable landscape impact of the new roundabout.

The Board will be pleased to enter into further discussion regarding any of the issues raised, and would like to see the final design for comment.

