OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail

Executive Summary

OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

Introduction

OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail (the Plan), sets out Oxfordshire County Council's bold ambitions for the future of rail in Oxfordshire. The Plan has been developed to support the over-arching aims and ambitions of our adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and describes a vision for rail in Oxfordshire being a central part of an integrated, accessible and sustainable transport system that enables all parts of the County to thrive. It also recognises the imminent and on-going changes in the structures of local government, devolution and the rail industry and the opportunities and challenges this may create.

The improved connectivity the Plan would deliver will help improve quality of life, support new housing and jobs and drive nationally significant economic growth and productivity.

It focuses on three key themes:

- Improving connectivity and enhancing infrastructure – defining the services, infrastructure and operational changes required.
- Climate action – setting out how rail can achieve net zero and adapt to a changing climate.
- Rail as place shaper – highlighting the role of stations and rail in shaping inclusive, connected communities.

We are committed to leading the delivery of this vision by deploying our resources, expertise and policy levers. But delivery cannot be achieved by us alone. Success will depend on Government, the rail industry and our local communities collaborating with us and playing their part. We envisage this being through the creation of an Oxfordshire Enhanced Rail Partnership building on the success we have seen with a similar partnership in our bus industry.

This plan has been developed with several key rail industry and regional partners and was publicly consulted on throughout September 2025 with an unprecedented and overwhelmingly supportive message from those individuals and businesses who responded. The full plan was adopted in November 2025.

Our vision and outcomes for rail

The OxRail 2040 vision is for our railway to be a central part of a world-class integrated, accessible and sustainable transport system that enables all parts of the county to thrive and:

- ensures that Oxfordshire retains its position of significance within our regional and national economy.
- enables significant growth and development, supporting new housing and job creation.
- ensures that Oxfordshire's thriving communities can fully participate in our economy and in society.
- contributes to the protection and enhancement of our natural and historic environment and meets our climate goals.

It will achieve this by:

- improving connectivity and enhancing infrastructure: delivering reliable, coherent and frequent connectivity to, from and across our County
- leading on climate action and achieving net zero: being zero carbon at the point of use and ensuring our railway still functions in a changing climate
- being a placeshaper: having safe and accessible stations (both existing and new) of the highest quality, equipped for the future and embedded at the heart of the communities they serve.

Outcomes we need from our railway:

Be predictable and reliable, fostering trust amongst both passengers and businesses.

Be competitive with road transport, in terms of cost, convenience, speed and quality.

Support the foundational economy by offering convenient access to our town and city centres where jobs and key facilities are increasingly located.

Support and reflect our communities, whether they be our urban areas or our rural communities, all residents should feel pride in their local station and the railway.

Support our transition to Net-Zero, by decarbonising and offering users – both passengers and freight – a low carbon alternative to private car travel.

Enable our economy to grow and become more productive, by making land for housing and employment more viable, avoiding the constraints posed by road congestion and opening labour markets for employers to wider catchments covering the whole County and beyond.

Be safe and inclusive, to ensure that all of our residents can participate in our economy and our society.
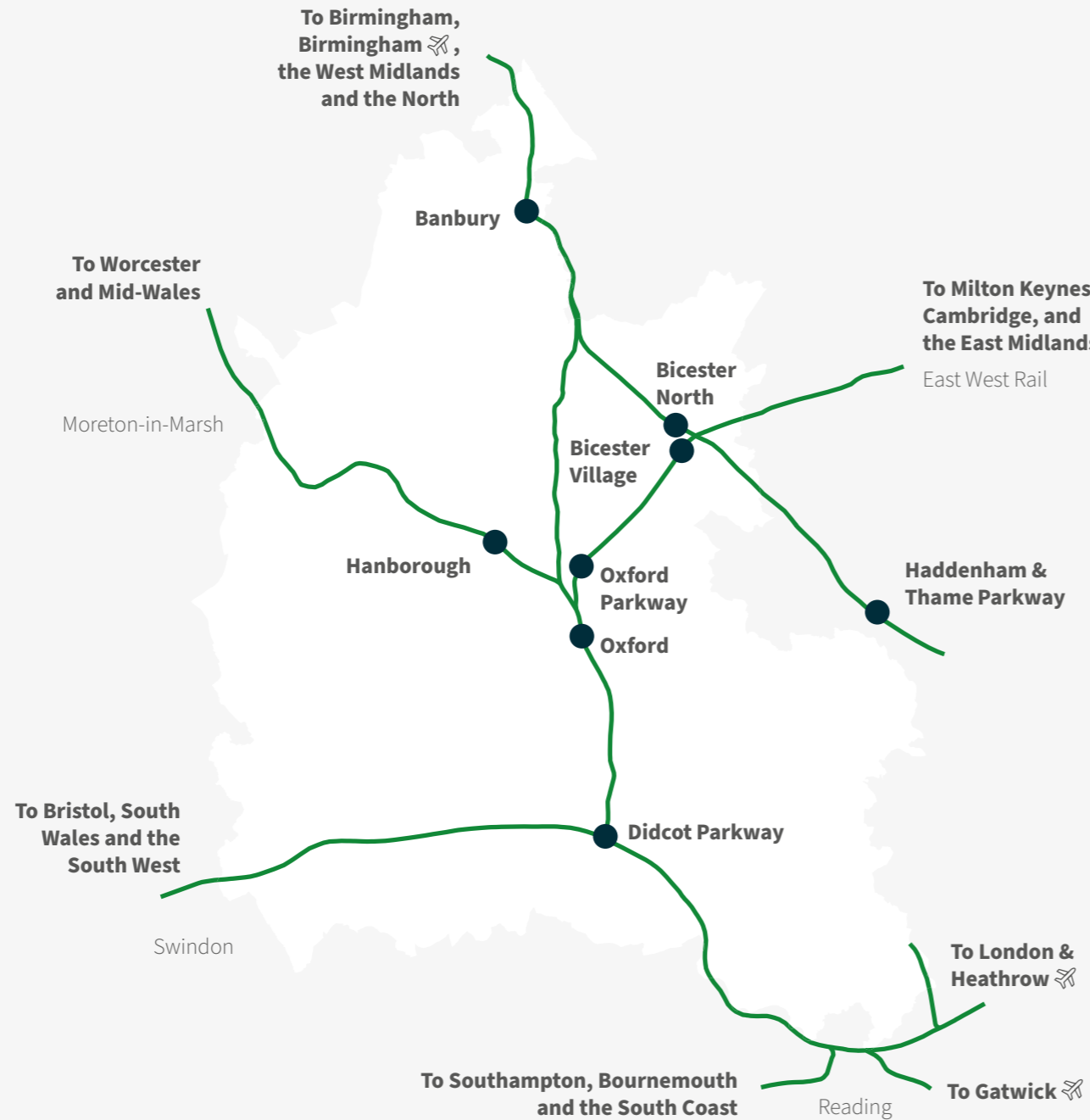
Properly integrate with other modes of sustainable transport, in order that people can reach employment and facilities located beyond the immediate environs of a station and be within reach of a station wherever they live within the County.

Regional connections

Our County sits at the centre of four railway corridors, occupying a key strategic position on the national network. Our corridors connect the Thames Valley and South of England with the Midlands and North and London with the West of England and Wales. All our corridors act as arteries linking our places together into a single network. Our network is already changing through enhanced connectivity to the east and providing improved connectivity between Cowley and Oxford.

We already have plans for service changes by making the current trial service between Bristol and Oxford via Bath and Swindon a permanent feature.

The County accommodates significant road and rail freight traffic - much of it using the national strategic network via the A34 and M40 - making its way between the south coast ports and distribution networks in the West Midlands, North-West and Scotland. Our rail network permits these strategic north-south movements and indeed is already well used taking an estimated 6,000 HGVs of the A34 every week with over seventy regular freight services every day. We need our railway to accommodate a substantial growth in freight movements and alleviate the burden on our overcrowded highways.

To Birmingham, Birmingham ✈, the West Midlands and the North

Banbury

To Worcester and Mid-Wales

To Milton Keynes, Cambridge, and the East Midlands

East West Rail

Bicester North

Moreton-in-Marsh

Bicester Village

Hanborough

Oxford Parkway

Haddenham & Thame Parkway

Oxford

To Bristol, South Wales and the South West

Didcot Parkway

Swindon

To London & Heathrow ✈

To Southampton, Bournemouth and the South Coast

Reading

To Gatwick ✈

Unlocking our railway's potential

Oxfordshire is a County of global significance

£24bn
Economy

725k
People

33k
Businesses

430k
Jobs

Located at the western end of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc we bring together world-leading science, research and innovation talent alongside a rich cultural heritage and strong communities. The rail network is central to connecting these communities, businesses and opportunities, while also helping to safeguard our environment and rural character.

To unlock the County's full potential, the railway must evolve. This means:

- connecting our innovation ecosystem reducing reliance on road transport
- supporting knowledge economy enterprises to maximise their skilled labour catchments
- attracting inward investment by removing market barriers
- tackling climate change by delivering a more efficient and resilient transport system for users
- offering affordable, accessible, attractive and reliable travel choices for all

Using the railway as a catalyst for growth and placemaking, supporting new homes, jobs and investment - Our growth projections would see our total population rise to over 800,000 by 2031 with growth concentrated close to the rail network but not served effectively by it. Our Plan could 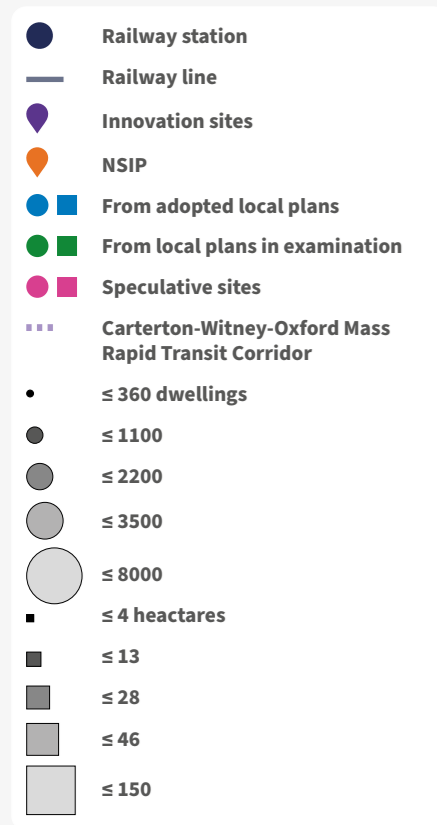support and enhance rail connectivity for over 240,000 residents and support over 20,000 additional jobs across the County.

Continuing to support our Foundational Economy - This is currently short-distance trips accommodated by other transport modes (such as bus and active travel). An integrated transport network across modes to support these movements is needed alongside attracting people from further afield to address our shrinking working age population and maximise labour pools.

Improving access to regional national and international markets and gateways - Connectivity between to London the West Midlands and West of England for shared specialisms in life science, advanced manufacturing and digital and technology will be key. For global growth we need good connectivity to international travel and gateways, especially Heathrow.

Tackling climate change while maintaining a reliable, resilient railway - We need to ensure competitive journey times, high reliability, clean and green railways at a fair price point to encourage modal shift of people and goods to rail.

"Our total population will rise to over 800,000 by 2031"

Legend:
- Railway station
- Railway line
- Innovation sites
- NSIP
- From adopted local plans
- From local plans in examination
- Speculative sites
- Carterton-Witney-Oxford Mass Rapid Transit Corridor

- ≤ 360 dwellings
- ≤ 1100
- ≤ 2200
- ≤ 3500
- ≤ 8000
- ≤ 4 heactares
- ≤ 13
- ≤ 28
- ≤ 46
- ≤ 150

Sites data from:
- Cherwell Local Plan 2042 reg 19 (with retained sites from Cherwell 2011-31)
- South and Vale Local Plan 2041 reg19* (with retained sites from South Oxfordshire 2035 and Vale of White Horse 2031)
- Oxford Local Plan 2036
- West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031

*Noting the letter from the inspector as of 1 Oct 2025.
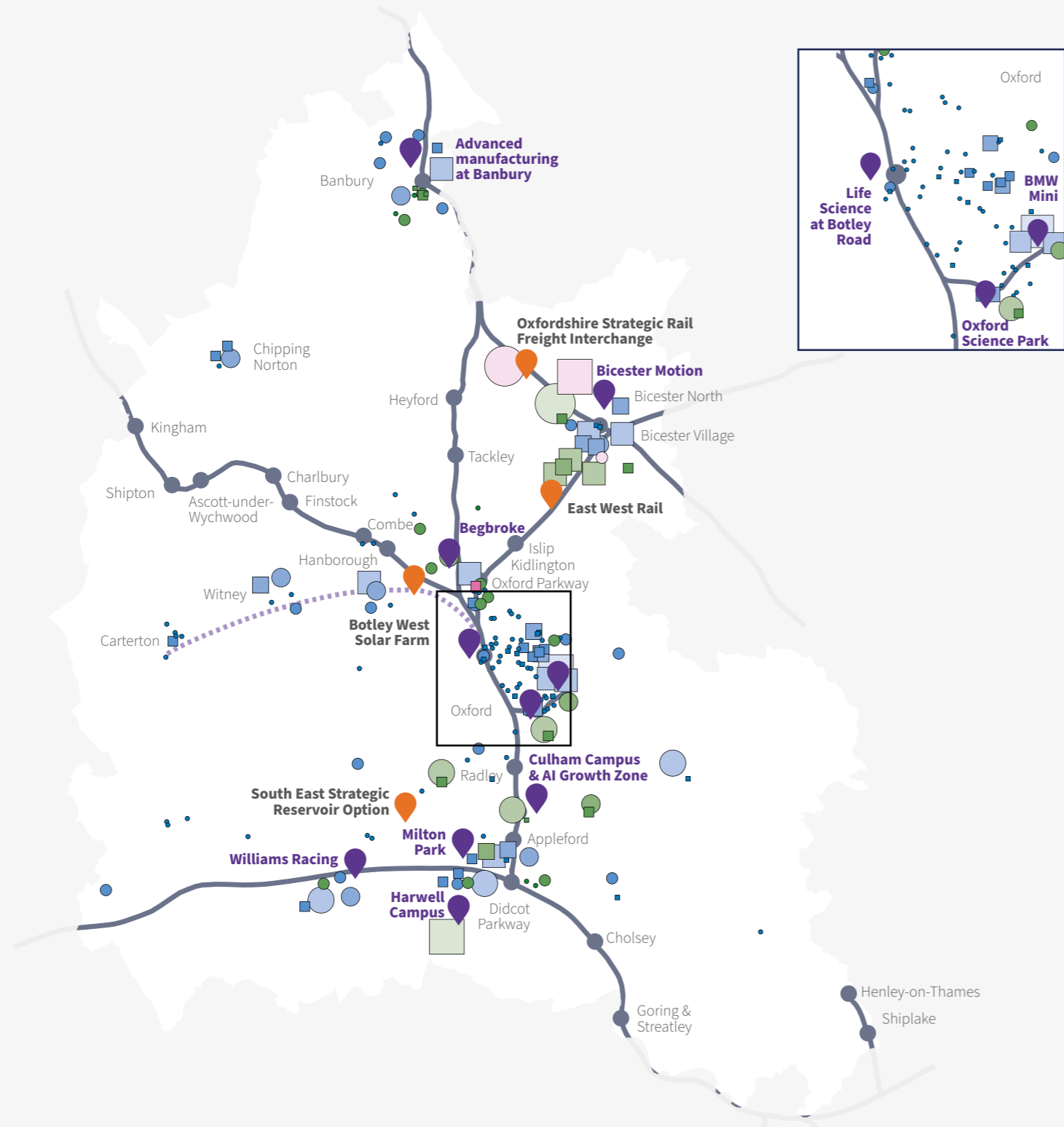
Concept future train service plan to support growth

Working with partners across the rail industry we have developed, as part of the OxRail 2040 Plan, a concept train service plan showing an indicative service for each station that we would like to realise as part of our vision.

Trains from Oxford: London Paddington, Banbury, Worcester and Hereford, Southampton and Bournemouth, Leeds and Newcastle, Cambridge, Bristol, Birmingham, London Marylebone, Oxford Cowley, Moreton-in-Marsh, Didcot Parkway, Milton Keynes, Banbury, Hanborough.

The proposed service pattern provides improved connectivity within the County, provides a broader access to the network, improves rural connectivity, enhances regional and national connections and keeps freight at the heart of our railways.

Direct Connections	Today	Future
Banbury - Oxford	2.5 tph	6 tph
Bicester/Oxford Parkway - Oxford	2 tph	8 tph
Oxford - London	4 tph	6 tph
Banbury - London	2 tph	3 tph
Hanborough - Oxford	1 tph	3 tph
Goring & Streatley and Cholsey - Oxford	-	1 tph
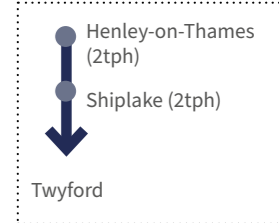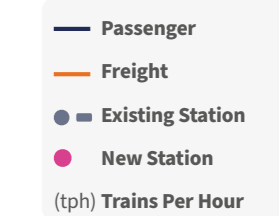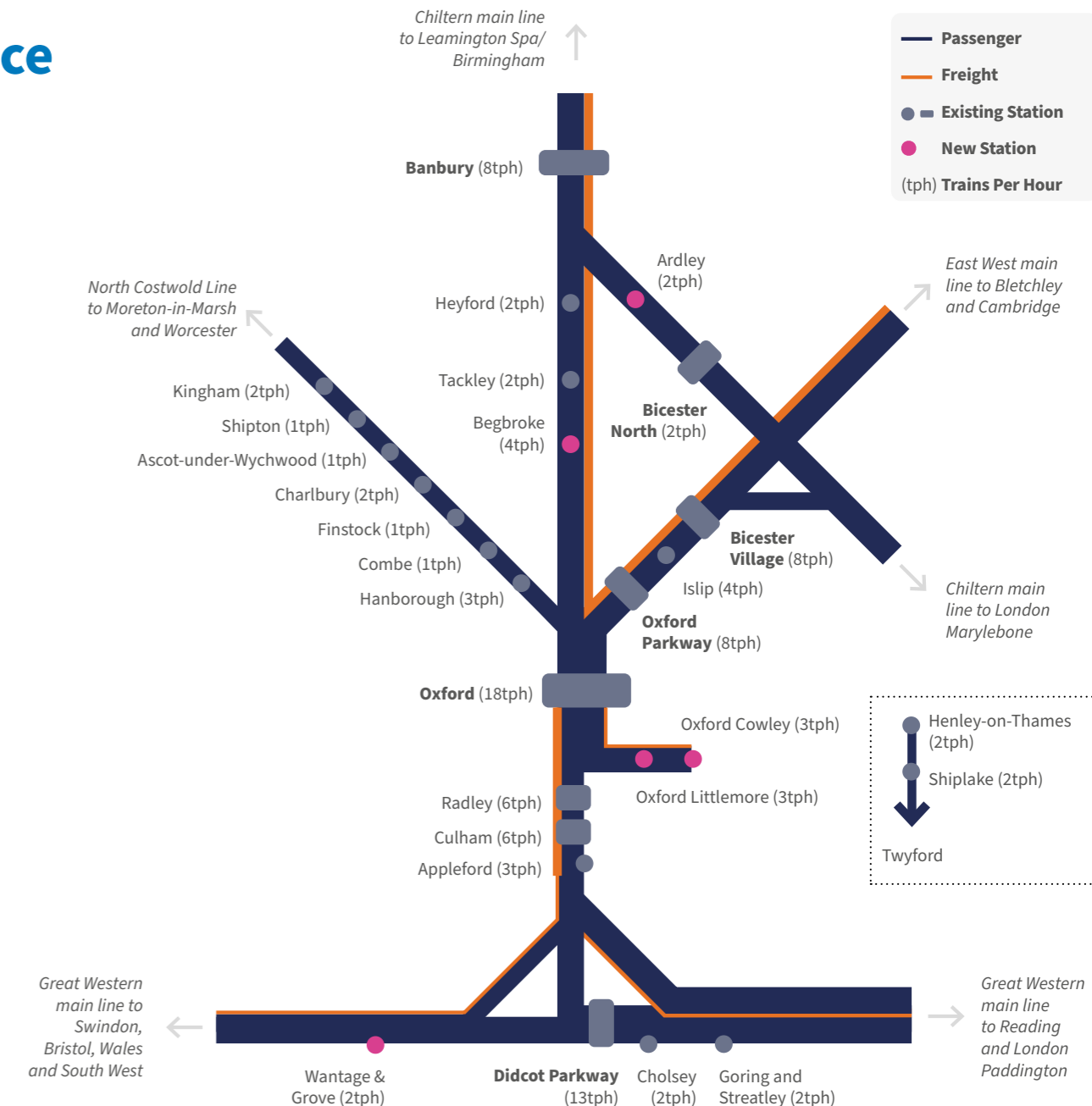
Our Priority - Oxfordshire Metro concept

The Government is developing a national integrated transport strategy and we are keen to lead the way on this front here in Oxfordshire. Our Plan welcomes this opportunity to bring together different modes of transport making it more accessible to more people in the County and we are calling this concept the Oxfordshire Metro.

Developing the concept of the Oxfordshire Metro will begin in Phase 1 (2025–2030) by laying the foundations of a fully integrated transport network, with new stations, improved ticketing and better links between rail, bus, walking and cycling to support housing, jobs and sustainable growth. This will make sustainable travel simpler, more reliable and more attractive for everyone.

What this means for travellers

- **Single ticketing platform** – use of multi-mode tickets and tap-and-go technology across bus and rail, with simple, capped fares and flexible tickets that reflect changing travel patterns.
- **Timetable coordination** – buses and trains running in harmony, supporting key workers and the wider economy with reliable "turn-up and go" services.
- **Seamless travel planning** – a single journey planning app across all modes, with clear interchange information on vehicles and at stations.
- **Longer operating hours** – safe and secure alternatives to the car, supporting people travelling early, late or for shift work.
- **More frequent services** – making it easier to reach jobs, health, education and cultural opportunities across the county.
- **Consistent brand** – a clear and trusted identity across all modes, so people know they are part of a coordinated countywide network.

How it will be delivered

The Oxfordshire Metro concept does not require re-regulation of buses. Instead, it will build on Oxfordshire's strong bus partnerships and close working with rail operators. Gaps in provision where commercial services are not viable may require future devolved funding and powers, for example through a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Next steps

Meaningful progress will begin in Phase 1 (2025–2030), with early priorities such as integrated ticketing. Delivery will accelerate as new transport powers and funding are secured and as rail reform provides Oxfordshire with a stronger voice in shaping the railway. The Oxfordshire Metro concept will form the core of a new model of joint investment and local accountability in transport.

Our Priority - The electrified railway

Electrification must form a core part of any solution for the delivery of zero-emission trains. As such, we have a bold vision for an "electric freight spine" of continuous overhead line electrification linking the Great Western Main Line (GWML) at Didcot Parkway to the West Coast Main Line (WCML) at Bletchley to be delivered by the end of 2037. This will allow rail freight passing through our region to switch to electric bi-mode locomotives and allow the bi-mode trains currently operating Worcester/Oxford – London Paddington services and future bi-mode trains to the North-West, North-East and South coast to operate in electric mode for longer.

The electric freight spine will also be key for the battery charging requirements for our new four- and five-car battery electric passenger trains which we expect to replace the legacy diesel fleet. These trains use energy stored in on-board batteries to continue to operate as an electric train even when away from overhead wires. We expect new trains will have the latest technology including comprehensive passenger information screens, electronic device charging, free and fast Wi-Fi and wherever possible, level-boarding. Trains will be longer and there will be more seats, cycle spaces and spacious walkthrough links with full accessibility at the heart of train design.

As electrification proposals develop, careful consideration will need to be given to infrastructure delivery to optimise the balance between disruption, time and cost.

How it will be delivered

With the existing GWML electrification at Didcot our electric freight spine will grow from the south of our region and spread northward. Building on the high-quality electrification infrastructure provided on the GWML means we can use power feeding arrangements that were installed in anticipation of electrification to Oxford and beyond. Careful phasing of electrification will be needed in conjunction with four-tracking between Didcot Parkway and Oxford.

Next steps

During Phase 1 (2025-2030) of this Plan, work will focus on partnering with the industry as it procures new battery trains for deployment across the County. During this phase, we also wish to see the development, design and early stage enabling works for the Oxfordshire electric freight spine project to enable delivery during Phase 2 (2031-2037). We would expect to see electrification to Oxford achieved by 2032 and the freight spine to be completed and operational by the end of Phase 2 or early years of Phase 3.

Also during Phase 2, we expect battery trains will be deployed on almost all passenger services throughout Oxfordshire including services on the Chiltern Main Line and the East West Rail Route. Battery trains on the Chiltern Main Line will most likely be realised through the deployment of a non-continuous electrification solution on the Chiltern Main Line between London Marylebone and Birmingham Moor Street complementing electrification provided as part of East West Rail.

Our Priority - Oxford Station

As Oxfordshire's busiest station, serving over 6.5 million passengers annually (with numbers set to grow), Oxford station is of countywide and national importance. Its redevelopment must go beyond a transport upgrade, delivering a landmark civic space, a regeneration catalyst and an exemplar of rail as placeshaper, while ensuring seamless transport. It should meet and exceed the framework's expectations for interchange, placemaking, accessibility and integration, becoming a flagship for what future-ready stations across Oxfordshire can achieve.

The Oxford West End Spatial Framework recognises the critical role of the station gateway, highlighting the need for high-quality public realm and infrastructure that delivers a welcoming, accessible arrival experience. Oxford deserves a station that reflects its civic identity, global reputation and sustainable ambitions. The current station falls short as an arrival point to one of the UK's most iconic cities. Redevelopment should therefore:

- Deliver a modern, architecturally distinctive place and building that instils local pride
- Create a high-quality public realm, with green infrastructure, safe walking routes and active frontages
- Seamlessly integrate the station into the city through thoughtful design, branding and wayfinding

- Providing a high-quality interchange between rail and all other modes of onward transport
- Enhance the experience for all users, with inclusive design, intuitive navigation and welcoming community spaces.

How it will be delivered

In Phase 1 (2025–2030) of this plan, Network Rail's Oxfordshire Connect project will deliver Platform 5 and a new Western Concourse, improving capacity and the passenger experience. Oxfordshire County Council will play a supporting role, ensuring the station's redevelopment which includes a new station building and improved surrounding areas aligns with wider transport, active travel and regeneration priorities and integrates fully with the Oxfordshire Metro vision. This will be captured through the development of an Oxford station masterplan.

The full transformation into a landmark station and gateway will be realised in Phase 2 (2031–2037), completing the masterplan and embedding Oxford Station at the heart of the city's next phase of growth. Oxfordshire County Council will be key in providing a leadership and enabling role to achieve this vision.

Next steps

We will work closely with Network Rail and other key rail industry stakeholders, Oxford City Council and other local stakeholders, landowners and developers to develop a credible master plan for the station which captures the level of ambition we need to make Oxford a world class gateway. We will ensure that this considers the emerging requirements from the Oxfordshire Metro concept and ensure that Oxford station can become a major transport interchange and gateway into our region.

"As Oxfordshire's busiest station, serving over 6.5 million passengers annually (with numbers set to grow), Oxford station is of countywide and national importance"

Our Priority - Proposed new stations

For many communities in Oxfordshire, particularly rural areas, access to rail is still limited. The OxRail 2040 Plan proposes four new stations – Oxford Littlemore, Oxford Cowley, Begbroke and Wantage & Grove – while also exploring the feasibility of a fifth at Ardley. These stations will reduce car dependency, link fast-growing towns and employment hubs to the network, and support sustainable growth.

- Oxford Cowley and Oxford Littlemore will connect residents and businesses in East Oxford to the city centre in under 10 minutes.
- Begbroke will serve the Oxford University Innovation District and strengthen the emerging route between Didcot and Banbury.
- Wantage & Grove will provide new rail connectivity to Oxford, Didcot, Reading, Swindon and Bristol, improving options for South-West Oxfordshire.
- Ardley is being explored to potentially serve Heyford Park housing, new leisure developments and the proposed Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange.

"These stations will reduce car dependency, link fast-growing towns and employment hubs"

How it will be delivered

Phase 1 (2025–2030): Reopen the Cowley Branch Line with two new stations at Oxford Cowley and Oxford Littlemore, while progressing feasibility and business cases for Begbroke, Wantage & Grove and Ardley. Launch the Oxfordshire Stations Action Plan (OSAP) to begin upgrading all stations into integrated, accessible mobility hubs.

Phase 2 (2031–2037): Deliver new stations at Begbroke and Wantage & Grove, continue development of a potential Ardley station, and expand OSAP upgrades to embed mobility hubs countywide.

Phase 3 (2038 onwards): Complete Ardley station if feasible and ensure all Oxfordshire stations operate as fully integrated, community-led hubs, supporting long-term growth and resilience

Next steps

In line with our priorities, we will develop a programme of new stations and station improvements, working on delivery with public and private sector partners. To kickstart more detailed work we have already conditionally approved up to £10 million from Enterprise Zone funding to rail plan priorities, and it is expected that this will lever in further funding from partners as work progresses.

The Cowley Branch Line: Enabling housing growth and job creation in south Oxford

Reopening the Cowley Branch Line will bring wide-ranging benefits to Oxford and the surrounding area by unlocking thousands of new homes and could create over 10,000 new jobs. It will help to reduce congestion, cut carbon emissions and provide the rail capacity needed to support East West Rail and government growth priorities. It is forecast to attract almost one million return journeys each year.

£120 million of funding has been secured from Central Government to reopen the Cowley Branch Line to passengers alongside the previously committed local contribution of £35m. Work will also be carried out to identify the additional infrastructure needed to connect the stations to their local communities such as new bridges, pedestrian and cycle routes and better connectivity with the bus network.

Wider infrastructure needs

Reopening the Cowley Branch Line to passenger traffic will transform connectivity to ARC Oxford (formally the Oxford Business Park), the Ellison Institute of Technology and the Oxford Science Park. New services will also connect some of Oxfordshire's most deprived communities in Littlemore and Blackbird Leys directly into the city centre in less than ten minutes, with the possibility of direct connections beyond via East West Rail and the Chiltern Main Line.

Connecting West Oxfordshire would enable a half-hourly service, achieved through partly doubling the long single line section between Wolvercote Junction and Charlbury. We envisage this scheme to be relatively straight forward and would include enabling the creation of a West Oxfordshire Mobility Hub at Hanborough to act as a gateway to West Oxfordshire. A strong case has been made for the development of mass rapid transit options, which may include rail, along the Oxford-Witney-Carterton growth corridor, including to support the development of RAF Brize Norton and surrounding industry.

The provision of several new freight facilities in and around our County could support continued freight growth with intermodal trains enabled by the full opening of East-West Rail serving our economy. An additional aggregates terminal close to Oxford could support further

construction growth. Close work with the rail freight industry and private sector bodies will be needed to make this a reality.

The infrastructure manager is developing plans for **a new fifth platform and proposals for a Western concourse at Oxford station** to provide additional through movement capacity. We expect this to include works to enhance capacity through Oxford North Junction. This is essential to deliver the train services being pursued during the earliest part of our outlined service pattern in the period up to 2030.

A range of incremental improvements by **adding new track sections between Oxford and Radley** are needed to accommodate passenger and freight train movements south of Oxford. We will continue to work with the infrastructure manager to understand what space-saving and safeguarding is required and whether the introduction of this additional capacity can be sequenced to provide increases to the peak hour capacity as early as possible. We will carefully consider the phasing of this in conjunction with electrification between Didcot Parkway and Oxford which is planned to be delivered by the end of 2032.

Long-term passenger and freight service growth will require significant **upgrading of capacity in the Didcot area** including grade separation at Didcot

East junction, additional capacity at Didcot North junction and development of a sixth platform at Didcot Parkway.

There are **several enhancements outside of Oxfordshire** which we believe will be critical to support our long-term ambitions. This includes East-West Rail to Cambridge, non-continuous electrification of the Chiltern Main Line, Phase 3 of Reading station redevelopment, Heathrow Western rail link, remodelling of junctions at Coventry, electrification to Banbury and beyond to Leamington Spa and Coventry, electrification of the route from Basingstoke to Reading and full electrification of the East West Main Line beyond Bletchley to Bedford, Cambridge and onto the Port of Felixstowe.

Resilient, green railway

Climate Resilience - Extreme weather events are becoming increasingly common and we will work with the rail industry to ensure that our priority railway assets are identified, designed, delivered, renewed and replaced with a changing climate in mind. Oxfordshire Metro will embed robust contingency plans for public transport so when issues arise people will still be able to get to where they are going. Our railway climate resilience plans will be captured in an Oxfordshire Railway Climate Change Resilience Plan.

Working with Stakeholders - We have been working with a group of local farmers in the North-East Cotswolds to establish how land could be managed differently to slow run off from fields and protect rail assets. Establishing and growing these relationships with stakeholders will be key in providing resilient infrastructure. We will aim to rollout our work with local farmers to manage water runoff from fields across the County.

Air Quality and Noise - We need a relentless focus on minimising NOx and Particulate Matter (PM) emissions from existing diesel trains. These emission types are very localised and are most acutely felt in Oxfordshire's urban areas, particularly those places where trains idle. We will establish a rail station air quality and noise monitoring network for key locations on our network to track and monitor air quality.

Bio-Diversity Net-Gain - We should be ensuring that bio-diversity net-gain and circular economy principles are a core requirement of all major rail infrastructure projects. We want our railway stations to become a focal point for people and sustainable wildlife. To support this we will develop an Oxfordshire Railway Bio-Diversity Net-Gain Requirements document.

Monitoring of our railways - Enhanced monitoring of our railway embankments, drainage flows, wire tension and rail temperatures using modern technology can support with understanding and responding to infrastructure under stress allowing intervention before something goes wrong. We will work closely with the rail industry, ensuring that remote condition monitoring is rolled out across our region.

Solar Energy Opportunities - We must optimise energy use and consider direct energy generation to support our whole railway system. To capture these opportunities we will develop an Oxfordshire Railway Solar Energy Opportunities Register to identify and monitor energy generation projects for our railways.

Sustainable Infrastructure - We want to see all of our new and refurbished railway buildings and their operations meet the highest sustainability standards. We will ensure core sustainability requirements are

embedded within our requirements for new stations and railway buildings outlining our expectations in an Oxfordshire Railway Sustainable Infrastructure Requirements document.

Embodied Emissions - The provision of new infrastructure and new trains will drive high steel, aluminium and concrete usage alongside emissions during construction and manufacturing. Decarbonisation of these sorts of materials and their installation will happen at national and even international levels. In Oxfordshire we will strive to pursue a net-zero emissions value chain from our designers and suppliers ensuring that embodied carbon emissions are reduced and offset as far as possible.

"We should be ensuring that bio-diversity net-gain and circular economy principles are a core requirement of all major rail infrastructure projects"

Rail for all

Our stations - To achieve the ambitions of this Plan and the concept of the Oxfordshire Metro, railway stations must evolve beyond access points into mobility hubs, integrated transport interchanges, community anchors and catalysts for regeneration. Building on the adopted Oxfordshire Mobility Hub Strategy, we will establish the Oxfordshire Stations Action Plan (OSAP) which outlines expectations around connectivity, accessibility, public realm, placemaking and multimodal integration. Our ambition is for all existing and new stations to meet the appropriate criteria for their hub category by 2040. Significant investment is already underway at Banbury and planned at Didcot Parkway, which demonstrates our intent.

First- and last-mile connectivity - Evidence from the National Centre for Accessible Transport shows that barriers often begin before people reach the station. A key part of driving successful first- and last- mile connectivity will be the creation of an integrated Oxfordshire Metro network map combining rail, bus, cycling and wheeling/walking routes.

Accessible stations - We believe everyone should be able to use railway stations safely and comfortably. Station design must include step-free accessibility, sensory navigation aids and clear and consistent wayfinding. Fully accessible facilities, including toilets, seating and help points, should be standard at larger stations with our biggest stations having Changing facilities and calm zones. To support the implementation of these areas we will establish an Oxfordshire Rail Station Accessibility Requirements document.

Safe Stations - We will work directly with vulnerable groups and those who experience safety concerns to co-develop station safety standards based on lived experience. A coordinated, intelligence-led approach with British Transport Police (BTP), Thames Valley Police (TVP) and train operators will strengthen both the visible presence and targeted enforcement where required. These will be a range of projects which we will manage as part of a Safer Stations Programme.

Travel education - We will lead in promoting inclusive travel education, especially for young people, older residents and those unfamiliar with public transport by partnering with schools, colleges, community organisations and health providers.

Stations in our communities - Local volunteers, supported by the Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership (OxCRP), can bring distinctive planting, art, storytelling and events to smaller stations, reinforcing their role not only as gateways to opportunity but also as civic and cultural anchors. We will continue to work closely with OxCRP and other community stakeholders.

Cultural heritage - By linking with local cultural calendars, stations can host events such as live music, seasonal markets and educational projects, boosting local economies and creating safe, vibrant environments. They can also act as gateways for low-carbon tourism. We will work with local communities to capture opportunities to embed local identity and cultural heritage at stations as well as their use for wider community activities and charitable purposes. We will create an active register of ideas and schemes to embed these as part of the development of our stations.

Local focused logistics - Stations can contribute to Oxfordshire's freight decarbonisation agenda by acting as local hubs for cleaner logistics. They can support cargo-bike and electric van provision, secure drop-off and pick-up lockers. We will work with key industry stakeholders to identify potential opportunities for sustainable local rail freight and last-mile logistics particularly at our major hubs.

"Railway stations must evolve beyond access points into mobility hubs"

Phase 1: 2025 to 2030 – The foundations for growth

Complete Oxfordshire Connect: By the end of August 2026, work at Oxford station will deliver a new six-track Botley Road bridge and better walking and cycling access, creating capacity for more trains. In Phase 1, master planning for Oxford Station (P2.08) will continue to expand facilities and develop the station into a landmark civic gateway. We envisage early stage of this to include a new fifth platform and western concourse (P1.07).

East West Rail and Oxford–Bristol: East West Rail will connect Oxford to Milton Keynes (2026) (P1.03) and Bedford (2030) and Cambridge (by 2038) (P2.03). In Phase 1, the priority is delivering EWR on time and securing a permanent hourly Oxford–Bristol service (P1.04).

The Oxfordshire Stations Action Plan: The Oxfordshire Stations Action Plan (P1.13), will audit every station and set priorities for improvement. This will include safer, more accessible facilities, climate-resilient design, heritage-led placemaking, and an air quality monitoring network starting with Oxford station.

New stations: Delivery of new stations at Oxford Littlemore and Oxford Cowley (P1.02) as part of introducing passenger services onto the Cowley branch (P1.01) will reconnect communities in south-east Oxford to the heart of the city and beyond. Beginning the development of stations at Begbroke (P2.01), and Wantage & Grove (P2.02) will focus on opportunities to reduce car dependency and support sustainable growth. A further station at Ardley (P3.02) could link Heyford Park and the proposed Puy de Fou theme park locally and regionally.

Oxfordshire Metro: Working closely with rail and bus operators we will begin to outline the details behind the Oxfordshire Metro concept (P3.04) and create a roadmap for its delivery over the time scales of this Plan. In Phase 1 our priority will be working towards an integrated electronic ticketing system which enables seamless travel between modes.

Connecting West Oxfordshire: Development along the A40 corridor from Oxford to Witney and Carterton will be critical to future sustainable growth in West Oxfordshire. RAF Brize Norton and its associated supply chain and local industrial ecosystem also look to be a long-term feature of the West Oxfordshire economy. These factors have led to a protected route for rapid mass transit options, which may include rail, being included in the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan which, should the project move forward, provide opportunities to consider higher densities of development in locations along the route. We will continue to develop options for longer term mass rapid transit (which may include rail) for the A40 corridor in West Oxfordshire (P3.05) and will identify deliverable plans and financing mechanisms for its implementation. We will do this whilst working with the rail industry to maximise the utility of the existing railway together with developing mobility hubs to provide sustainable travel options for West Oxfordshire.

Modernising and decarbonising trains: Modern, higher-capacity, zero-carbon trains are needed to cut emissions and meet future demand and we will work with the rail industry to make this a reality (P2.11). While electrification between Didcot Parkway and Bletchley is a long-term delivery ambition, early progress can be made on the planning and development of this (P3.03).

Other interventions: Identify new rail freight facility requirements in Oxfordshire (P1.06), Oxfordshire Railway Climate Change Resilience Plan (P1.09), Embed remote condition monitoring for railway hot spots (P1.08), Expand our local farmer water management engagement (P1.10), Establish air quality and noise monitoring network (P1.11), Oxfordshire railway solar energy opportunities register (P1.12), Oxfordshire railway bio-diversity net-gain requirements document (P1.05), Banbury station upgrades complete (P1.14), Establish Oxfordshire rail station accessibility requirements document (P1.15), Travel confidence and education programme established (P1.16), Complete Safer Stations Programme (P1.17), Establish Oxfordshire Enhanced Rail Partnership (P1.18)

Phase 2: 2031 to 2037 – Enhancing capacity and connectivity

Upgrading the North Cotswold Line: Reinstating a second track between Hanborough and Wolvercote, plus a new West Oxfordshire Mobility Hub at Hanborough, would enable services between Moreton-in-Marsh and Didcot Parkway alongside hourly London services (P2.07). Our aspiration would be to enable a third train an hour to terminate at Hanborough.

Enhancing capacity between Didcot Parkway and Oxford: To support growing service levels, we believe that more tracks will be needed between Didcot Parkway and Oxford. We envisage this to include part or full four-tracking of the section between Radley and Oxford (P2.06). We will work closely with the infrastructure manager to safeguard land required.

Providing the first stages of the Electric Freight Spine: We have an aspiration to see electrification reach Oxford by 2032 and extend onwards towards Bletchley by the end of phase 2 (P3.03). We will work closely with the railway industry to consider phasing in conjunction with other projects.

New battery trains enter into service: We will begin to see introduction of the new fleet providing enhanced capacity and higher-quality, greener, more reliable journeys for everyone using our network (P2.11).

New stations become a reality: The Oxford station Masterplan is expected to by realised by the end of Phase 2 providing a game changing gateway into our city (P2.08).

Beyond Oxford further new stations will be delivered with Begbroke (P2.01) and Wantage and Grove (P2.02) planned in this phase.

Connecting West Oxfordshire: Work will be progressed in building out the business case for the Oxford-Witney-Carterton mass rapid transit option, in support of enhanced development along the identified growth corridor.

Other Oxfordshire interventions

- Renewable energy for rail traction trials (P2.12)
- Oxfordshire railway sustainable infrastructure requirements document (P2.05)
- Pursue a net-zero emissions value chain (P2.04)
- Establish network map combining rail, bus, cycling, wheeling/walking routes (P2.13)

"We have an aspiration to see electrification reach Oxford by 2032"

Other interventions outside of Oxfordshire

- Midlands Rail Hub programme is due to complete
- HS2 opens to Birmingham releasing capacity on the WCML
- Chiltern Main Line non-continuous electrification (P2.08)
- Phase 3 of Reading station redevelopment (P2.10)

Phase 3: 2038 onwards – Realising our railway's full potential

Realising our final service specification: The core part of Phase 3 is realising our outlined train service specification (P3.01). This will be a complex programme where services will be realised over time as infrastructure and new trains begin to become available.

Additional capacity at Didcot Parkway: We believe a series of capacity interventions will be required at Didcot Parkway including grade separation and additional platforms (P3.08).

Onward electrification: Priorities include Oxford–Banbury–Coventry (P3.07), Reading–Basingstoke (P3.10), and the full East West Rail corridor (P3.11). Alongside this, Government support will be sought to incentivise the rail freight and rolling stock industries to commit to zero-emission traction.
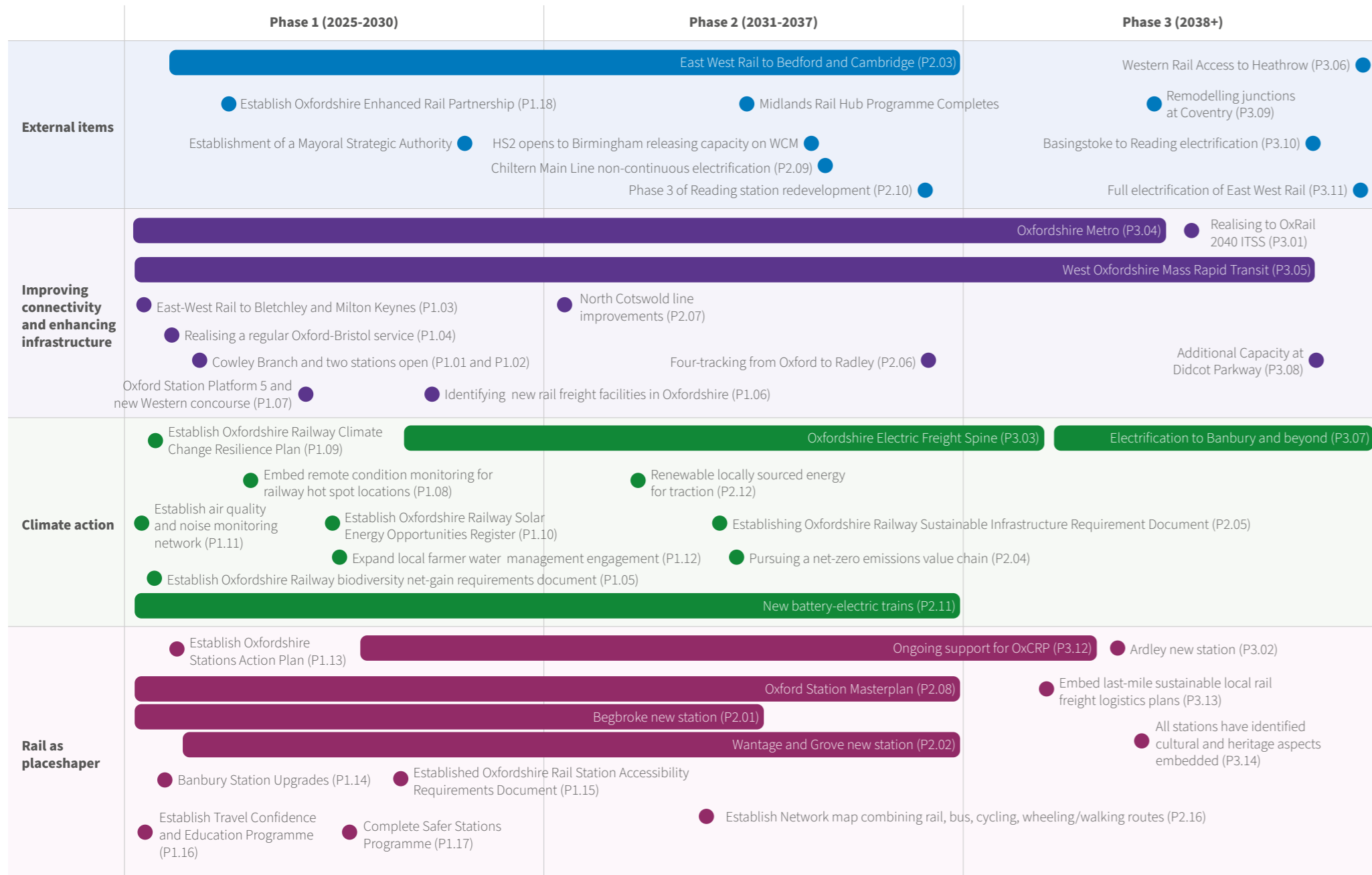
Other Oxfordshire interventions

- New Station at Ardley (P3.02)
- Last-mile sustainable local rail freight logistics plans (P3.13)
- All stations have identified cultural and heritage aspects embedded (P3.14)

Other interventions outside of Oxfordshire

- Western Rail Link to Heathrow (P3.06)
- Remodelling of junctions at Coventry to support enhanced long-distance services (P3.09)

	Phase 1 (2025-2030)	Phase 2 (2031-2037)	Phase 3 (2038+)

External items

East West Rail to Bedford and Cambridge (P2.03)

Western Rail Access to Heathrow (P3.06)

Establish Oxfordshire Enhanced Rail Partnership (P1.18)

Midlands Rail Hub Programme Completes

Remodelling junctions at Coventry (P3.09)

Establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority

HS2 opens to Birmingham releasing capacity on WCM

Basingstoke to Reading electrification (P3.10)

Chiltern Main Line non-continuous electrification (P2.09)

Phase 3 of Reading station redevelopment (P2.10)

Full electrification of East West Rail (P3.11)

Improving connectivity and enhancing infrastructure

Oxfordshire Metro (P3.04)

Realising to OxRAIL 2040 ITSS (P3.01)

West Oxfordshire Mass Rapid Transit (P3.05)

East-West Rail to Bletchley and Milton Keynes (P1.03)

North Cotswold line improvements (P2.07)

Realising a regular Oxford-Bristol service (P1.04)

Cowley Branch and two stations open (P1.01 and P1.02)

Four-tracking from Oxford to Radley (P2.06)

Additional Capacity at Didcot Parkway (P3.08)

Oxford Station Platform 5 and new Western concourse (P1.07)

Identifying new rail freight facilities in Oxfordshire (P1.06)

Climate action

Establish Oxfordshire Railway Climate Change Resilience Plan (P1.09)

Oxfordshire Electric Freight Spine (P3.03)

Electrification to Banbury and beyond (P3.07)

Embed remote condition monitoring for railway hot spot locations (P1.08)

Renewable locally sourced energy for traction (P2.12)

Establish air quality and noise monitoring network (P1.11)

Establish Oxfordshire Railway Solar Energy Opportunities Register (P1.10)

Establishing Oxfordshire Railway Sustainable Infrastructure Requirement Document (P2.05)

Expand local farmer water management engagement (P1.12)

Pursuing a net-zero emissions value chain (P2.04)

Establish Oxfordshire Railway biodiversity net-gain requirements document (P1.05)

New battery-electric trains (P2.11)

Rail as placeshaper

Establish Oxfordshire Stations Action Plan (P1.13)

Ongoing support for OxCRP (P3.12)

Ardley new station (P3.02)

Oxford Station Masterplan (P2.08)

Embed last-mile sustainable local rail freight logistics plans (P3.13)

Begbroke new station (P2.01)

Wantage and Grove new station (P2.02)

All stations have identified cultural and heritage aspects embedded (P3.14)

Banbury Station Upgrades (P1.14)

Established Oxfordshire Rail Station Accessibility Requirements Document (P1.15)

Establish Travel Confidence and Education Programme (P1.16)

Complete Safer Stations Programme (P1.17)

Establish Network map combining rail, bus, cycling, wheeling/walking routes (P2.16)

Achieving our vision

Our role in transforming Oxfordshire's railway

Oxfordshire County Council will lead the creation of the Oxfordshire Metro concept, a joined-up transport system linking rail, bus, cycling and walking. In Phase 1 (2025–2030) this includes integrated ticketing, first–last mile connections, new multi-modal stations, digital travel information and developing a programme of new stations at Oxford Cowley, Oxford Littlemore, Wantage & Grove, Begbroke and Ardley.

We will deliver safer, more accessible and more inclusive stations through the Accessible Stations Programme and Safer Stations Programme, alongside a new air quality monitoring network. It will also lead outreach and education programmes to build travel confidence, ensure station upgrades are aligned with housing and spatial planning and support the transition to cleaner trains through early work on rolling stock replacement.

We will support the transformation of Oxford station into a national gateway and ensure East West Rail is embedded in our railway. We will also promote walking, cycling and bus integration, support renewable energy pilots at stations and back the creation of a decarbonised Electric Freight Spine.

We will track our progress, demonstrate delivery against our commitments and ensure the Plan remains responsive to changing needs through a monitoring and evaluation framework, aligned with wider LTCP framework. We will publish annual updates supported by KPIs, to provide transparency, measure rail's contribution to wider transport objectives and reflect the impacts of growth and sustainable travel goals.

Working together with partners

Delivering this vision requires close collaboration with Government, the Infrastructure Manager (currently Network Rail), train operators, local authorities across Oxfordshire and the wider Thames Valley, as well as businesses, developers, universities, community rail partnerships and policing bodies.

In Phase 1 (2025–2030), partnership will be key to delivering Platform 5 and a new western concourse at Oxford station with Network Rail and Government, reopening the Cowley Branch Line with Oxford City Council and private sector investors and securing funding and approvals for new stations in partnership with developers and district councils. Work with operators will help establish remote condition monitoring, while collaboration with the Department for Transport and HM Treasury will be essential for rolling stock replacement. To make this a reality we will establish the Oxfordshire Enhanced Rail Partnership to provide co-ordinated working on our railways.

Partnerships with freight operators and the private sector will support expansion of the Electric Freight Spine, while collaboration with district councils, bus companies and active travel bodies will ensure integration of cycling, walking and bus networks.

wsp