

Divisions Affected – Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds; Didcot Ladygrove; Didcot South; Didcot West; Drayton, Sutton Courtenay & Steventon; Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

12 DECEMBER 2025

Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) - Didcot Science Bridge construction contract

Report by Director of Environment and Highways

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- a) Approve the award of a contract for the construction of Didcot Science Bridge Scheme under the HIF1 programme to the Preferred Bidder; and**
- b) Authorise the Director of Environment and Highways to finalise the contract terms and enter into a construction contract with the Preferred Bidder for the Didcot Science Bridge (DSB) scheme under the HIF1 programme.**

Executive Summary

1. This report seeks approval to award a construction contract for the Didcot Science Bridge (DSB), one of three major infrastructure projects within the Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) programme and to delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Highways to finalise the contract terms and enter into the construction contract.
2. The Didcot Science Bridge forms a critical component of the wider HIF1 package designed to improve connectivity between Didcot and Culham, relieve congestion, and support the delivery of over 12,655 new homes and significant employment growth across the Science Vale.
3. The Full Business Case (FBC) for the Didcot Science Bridge scheme, which also includes the A4130 Widening, has been approved.
4. The construction contract, to be procured under the NEC4 Engineering and Construction Contract (ECC) Option C, will be funded primarily through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant, supplemented by approved Council capital allocations, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and S106 contributions.

Exempt Information

5. The following information is considered exempt due to commercial sensitivity:

- Details of tenders and tender prices in Annex A

Background

6. The A4130 will provide a dual carriageway leading to a bridge that crosses over the A4130, Great Western Main Line and Milton Road and ties into the Didcot to Culham River Crossing scheme at Collett Roundabout. The bridge includes segregated walking and cycling facilities. It will link the A4130 Milton Gate junction with the A4130 Northern Perimeter Road, improving east–west connectivity across Didcot and enabling planned development to proceed sustainably.

7. The scheme forms part of the wider HIF1 Access to Didcot Garden Town Programme, which also includes:

- Didcot to Culham River Crossing
- Clifton Hampden Bypass

8. Planning permission for the DSB and associated infrastructure was granted by the Secretary of State in December 2024 following a conjoined Planning and Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Inquiry. The CPO was confirmed by the Department for Transport on 30 June 2025, with publication on 31 July 2025.

9. The Council invited providers to bid for this opportunity via Lot 4 of the PAGABO National Framework for Civils and Infrastructure under a mini competition following sign off of the Procurement Strategy. The tender comprised the following award criteria:

Compliance with Specification	Pass/Fail
Price	Pass
Quality	50%
Price	40%
Social value	10%
Total	100%

At the tender deadline 2 bids were submitted for the NEC4 ECC construction contract.

10. The project is fully funded under the revised Grant Determination Agreement (GDA) with Homes England, approved by Cabinet in July 2024, which secures total programme funding of £332.538 million and a £79.6 million Homes England funder contingency.

Key Issues

11. The approval of this construction contract is essential to maintain programme momentum and ensure expenditure of the Homes England grant within the agreed timeframe of March 2028.
12. Delay in contract award would risk non-delivery of key milestones, loss of confidence from funders, and potential withdrawal of grant funding.
13. The scheme directly supports the housing delivery target of 12,655 set out in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Plans and is a fundamental enabler of the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan and Science Vale Transport Strategy.
14. The scheme also supports employment growth along the length of the scheme with the proposed expansion of Culham Science Centre. There are also commercial sites proposed on the old Didcot power station site and to the south of the A4130 Road close to the Milton Interchange

Procurement Strategy

15. The Procurement Strategy recommended that:
 - a. The PAGABO National Framework for Civils and Infrastructure Lot 4 was used as it provides a cost and resource effective route to market with a small fee, a familiar arrangement, and competition.
 - b. A mini competition be conducted.
 - c. The Contract would be a one stage construction contract with elements of contractor's design
16. Pursuant to this strategy the Council invited providers to bid for this opportunity via the PAGABO National Framework for Civils and Infrastructure, Lot 4) following signoff of the Procurement Strategy. The tender was comprised the following award criteria:

Compliance with Specification	Pass/Fail
Price	Pass
Quality	50%
Price	40%
Social value	10%
Total	100%

At the tender deadline 2 bids were submitted. They were assessed in accordance with the above criteria. The bid from Bidder 1 was assessed as non-compliant. The bid from Bidder 2 (the Preferred Bidder) was compliant and, following completion of the evaluation, was considered to be the most economically advantageous Tender.

Financial Implications

17. The approved Didcot Science Bridge Full Business Case releases budget, largely funded by HIF grant, to cover the costs up to the end of Stage 3 (construction) and includes suitable contingency and inflation allowances.

18. The approved Didcot Science Bridge Full Business Case releases budget, largely funded by HIF grant, to cover the costs up to the end of Stage 3 (construction) and includes suitable contingency and inflation allowances.
19. The released budget covers the cost of the proposed contract to deliver the construction of the scheme.

Comments checked by: Rob Finlayson, Strategic Finance Business Partner
(Rob.Finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Legal Implications

20. The Council is acting in capacity as the highway authority for Oxfordshire under the Highways Act 1980 in respect of the construction of the Didcot Science Bridge.
21. The procurement has been conducted using the Pagabo National Framework for Civils and Infrastructure which is a Public Contract Regulations 2015 compliant framework. Using the framework also ensured compliance with Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
22. The procurement has been conducted using the Pagabo National Framework for Civils and Infrastructure which is a Public Contract Regulations 2015 compliant framework. Using the framework also ensured compliance with Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
23. The NEC4 ECC Option C form of contract is appropriate for complex infrastructure works of this nature, providing flexibility and shared risk management between OCC and the contractor. The standard form of contract has been amended to include OCC's standard requirements.

Comments checked by: Jayne Pringle – Contracts & Conveyancing
(Jayne.Pringle@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Insurance Requirements

25. As a requirement of the scheme providing a bridge over the Great Western Railway line an Asset Protection Agreement between Network Rail and OCC has been signed. The Insurance team has advised the project to operate under an owner-controlled insurance policy (OCIP) with a £155m liability as required by the agreement. The main contractor will be added to the OCIP to ensure any liabilities can be transferred.
26. The main NEC4 contract insurances have all been confirmed through Oxfordshire County Council insurance team and are acceptable to the contractor

Staff Implications

27. No additional staff resources are required as a result of this decision. The scheme will continue to be managed within the existing HIF1 Project Team under the leadership of the Programme Lead.

Sustainability Implications

28. The scheme supports the Council's Climate Action Framework by promoting modal shift through high-quality active travel provision and reducing congestion within Didcot. The design includes biodiversity enhancements and carbon reduction measures. There are no implications related to the previously completed CIA and EQIA as a result of this decision. Both documents are noted as background documents.

Social Value

29. Under this contract the contractor shall be required to provide Social Value, while this may change during the construction process it will include some of the following:

- Creating Local employment opportunities
- Minimising the carbon impact of the construction process
- Support local communities through various initiatives

Current Programme

30. The projects programme overview is as below:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| • Receipt of Planning Approval: | December 2024 |
| • Contractor into Contract: | December 2025 |
| • Enabling Works: | December 2025 – March 2026 |
| • Main Construction: | April 2026 – March 2028 |
| • Infrastructure Start on Site: | April 2026 |
| • Contract with Main contractor: | December 2026 |
| • Homes England: End of funding period: | March 2028 |
| • Land Acquisition: | January 2026 |

Risk Management

31. The current total risk allowance for the A4130/DSB scheme is £16.02 million (14.67% of total budget), incorporating inflation, optimism bias, and QCRA outputs. Key risks include inflationary pressures, statutory undertaker delays, and compliance with funder milestones. These are managed through monthly risk reviews and reporting to the HIF1 Programme Board.

Consultations

32. Extensive public consultation was undertaken in 2018 and 2020, supported by exhibitions and online engagement. Stakeholder engagement has continued throughout planning and inquiry stages, with regular liaison with local members,

parish councils, statutory consultees, and developers. No further consultation is planned.

33. Recent public information events were held in October 2025 in six different locations to inform the public in advance of enabling and construction works. The public will continue to be informed of progress with the scheme via a regular e-newsletter and website updates.

Paul Fermer
Director of Environment and Highways

Background papers:

- Cabinet Report 16 July 2024 – Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1): Amendments to the Grant Determination Agreement
- Climate Impact Assessment (originally included within Reg 25 planning submission dated 26 October 2022)
- Equalities Impact Assessment (originally included within Appendix 13 of the Statement of Case for the conjoined Planning and Orders Inquiry dated November 2023)

Contact Officer:

Stephen Gardner – Senior Project Manager, HIF1 Programme
Stephen.gardner@oxfordshire.gov.uk

December 2025