

Divisions Affected –Didcot East and Hagbourne, Didcot West, Didcot Ladygrove, Wallingford, Berinsfield and Garsington, Sutton Courtenay and Marcham, Hendreds and Harwell, Abingdon South

CMD Highway Management – 14 DECEMBER 2023

Didcot Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Report by Bill Cotton, Corporate Director for Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is RECOMMENDED to approve the Didcot Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).**

Executive Summary

2. The Didcot LCWIP is the seventh LCWIP to be considered for approval by the County Council.
3. The Didcot LCWIP is explicitly called for in the County Council's adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP). Policy 3a in the LTCP states that the County Council will "*[develop] Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for all main urban settlements (over 10,000 inhabitants) across the county by 2025, according to national guidance and best practice with the aim of increasing walking and cycling activity.*"¹
4. The LCWIP identifies a network of walking and cycling routes in and around Didcot (including potential future routes) and sets out high level proposals for improvements to the walking and cycling infrastructure which makes up this network. These infrastructure improvements are intended for development over a ten year period to 2033 and will help to enable modal shift from private vehicle use to active and sustainable modes of travel.
5. Adopting the Didcot LCWIP will help to provide local policy backing to maximise the County Council's ability to secure funding for development and delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure in the Didcot area from central government and funding for or direct delivery of infrastructure improvements from local

¹ Oxfordshire County Council, Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, July 2022, p41, available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf>

developments (including, but not limited to the strategic allocations at Land Adjacent to Culham Science Centre and Berinsfield).

6. This LCWIP is a joint project with Didcot Garden Town Team Officers in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, and has benefitted from consultant support funded by the Didcot Garden Town Team. The District Council Officers are taking this LCWIP for endorsement through their equivalent CMD processes, along the same timescales as the OCC CMD process.

Introduction

7. The Didcot LCWIP is the seventh LCWIP in the County Council's programme to be considered for approval, following Oxford (Cabinet, March 2020), Bicester (Cabinet, September 2020), Kidlington (Cabinet, January 2022), Abingdon (Cabinet, February 2023), Witney (Cabinet, March 2023), and Banbury (Cabinet, July 2023) LCWIPs.
8. The Didcot LCWIP will help the County Council to:
 - (a) identify walking and cycling infrastructure improvements for future investment in the short, medium, and long term
 - (b) ensure that priority is given to walking and cycling within both local planning and local transport policies and strategies
 - (c) make the case for future funding for walking and cycling infrastructure
9. The Didcot LCWIP will form a key component part of the Didcot Area Travel Plan and will therefore become a component part of the overarching Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).
10. The LCWIP is intended to be a living document, which will be reviewed and updated regularly in order to reflect:
 - (a) significant changes in local circumstances
 - (b) changes to the policies and guidance upon which this first version of the LCWIP is based
 - (c) progress on scheme development work
 - (d) extension of the lifespan of the plan (which is initially intended to cover a ten year period from its approval).

Didcot LCWIP Content

11. The LCWIP identifies a network of routes which are significant for walking and cycling in and around Didcot (see map on page 74 of Annex 1, replicated in higher quality as "Appendix B_Route Network" of Annex 1), examines existing conditions for walking and cycling on this network, investigates the potential for future modal shift to walking and cycling in the area (if adequate infrastructure to support this behaviour change is provided), and sets out high level proposals for a range of specific walking and cycling infrastructure improvements. Also

identified are 'future routes' which in some cases would be delivered as integral parts to major schemes in this area, if the schemes progress to delivery.

12. The proposed walking and cycling infrastructure improvements include (but not limited to):
 - (a) new and improved crossings for walking and cycling
 - (b) junction redesign to prioritise walking and cycling movements
 - (c) removal or modification of barriers on walking and cycling routes to improve accessibility
 - (d) provision of additional high-quality cycle parking
 - (e) on-carriageway cycling improvements (e.g., wider cycle lanes and centreline removal, some of which may require additional parking restrictions)
 - (f) provision of segregated cycle tracks (some of which will require reallocation of highway space from motor vehicles to active travel)
 - (g) permissions for cycling on some routes where cycling is not currently permitted
 - (h) new river crossings for walking and cycling over the river Thames
 - (i) footway widening and public realm improvements
 - (j) provision of new and improved walking and cycling routes between Didcot and other key local destinations (outside the town)

13. It is anticipated that the proposals made in the LCWIP will be prioritised dynamically by County Council officers, in response to funding opportunities. This will give officers the flexibility to consider the requirements of the funding source in question (e.g., compliance with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010² for developer funding, or stipulations from central government agencies on the priorities for a particular funding stream).

Corporate Policies and Priorities

14. The Didcot LCWIP is explicitly called for in the adopted LTCP's Policy 3a, which states that the County Council will "[develop] Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for all main urban settlements (over 10,000 inhabitants) across the county by 2025, according to national guidance and best practice with the aim of increasing walking and cycling activity."³

² Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 2010, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/948/contents/>

³ Oxfordshire County Council, Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, July 2022, p41, available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf>

15. The LCWIP is well aligned with the County Council's nine priorities as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025⁴, with particular significance to the following priorities:
- (a) Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
 - (b) Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.
 - (c) Invest in an inclusive, integrated, and sustainable transport network.

Financial Implications

16. The LCWIP will help the County Council to negotiate with developers for funding and direct delivery of infrastructure for active travel. It will also help with preparation of bids for government funding, as demonstrated by the recent Active Travel Fund bid processes.
17. Development of any new schemes proposed in the LCWIP (except those to be directly delivered by developers) will need to be considered through the County Council's capital programme governance and budget setting process as funding becomes available.
18. Any new cycling and walking infrastructure will have revenue implications due to pressures on staff resources, which will be either funded within current base budgets or bid for through Active Travel Fund (or similar) bids. Ongoing maintenance for each scheme would be identified during the early stages of that scheme. Where possible, commuted sums to fund ongoing maintenance of new infrastructure related to new developments would also be identified and secured to minimise the revenue impact of the new infrastructure. Any revenue pressure after this would be considered as part of the Council's Budget Strategy process.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

19. The LCWIP is a requirement of the County Council's adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which is a statutory document, required under the Transport Act 2000. Delivering the LCWIP is likely to require the County Council to exercise its powers to make traffic orders to regulate traffic in the Didcot area. The appropriate statutory consultation will take place as and when any orders are promoted, together with compliance with any relevant statutory duty applicable at the time.

Comments checked by:

⁴ Oxfordshire County Council, Strategic Plan 2022-2025, available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/our-vision-0>

Staff Implications

20. Individual schemes within the LCWIP will require development and delivery, which would only take place in the event that suitable funding sources and staff resource are identified.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

21. Development and implementation of LCWIPs for all the main urban settlements in Oxfordshire (LTCP Policy 3a) is one of Oxfordshire County Council's commitments to move towards the vision set out in the LTCP for "*an inclusive and safe net-zero Oxfordshire transport system that enables all parts of the county to thrive*".⁵
22. Whilst no negative equalities impacts have been identified which could arise as a direct result of approving the Didcot LCWIP, there is a significant opportunity to tackle inequality.
23. The LCWIP promotes investment in infrastructure which will help to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of the transport system in the Didcot area. This will enable people with protected characteristics who do not currently feel safe or able to travel by active and sustainable modes to do so more easily, enable people to live active lifestyles, reduce the need for private car ownership and use, improve access for deprived areas, and contribute to a long-term improvement in air quality.
24. All individual highways schemes may result in unintended negative equalities impacts. This risk will be considered in detail on a scheme-by-scheme basis (using scheme-specific EIAs as appropriate) when the individual schemes promoted in the LCWIP are developed.

Sustainability Implications

25. Development and implementation of LCWIPs for all the main urban settlements in Oxfordshire (LTCP Policy 3a) is one of Oxfordshire County Council's commitments to move towards the vision set out in the LTCP for "*an inclusive and safe net-zero Oxfordshire transport system that enables all parts of the county to thrive*".⁵

⁵ Oxfordshire County Council, Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, July 2022, p5, available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf>

26. The Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) (Annex 4), for the project is therefore overwhelmingly positive, recognising the significant potential for improvements across the following climate impact categories:
- (a) Transport and Connectivity (by supporting a shift to active travel)
 - (b) Buildings (by promoting sustainable development)
 - (c) Procurement and Investment (by investing in climate action)
 - (d) People and Organization (by driving behaviour change with enabling infrastructure)
 - (e) Just Transition (by promoting health and wellbeing through active travel, promoting engagement and coproduction, and reducing inequality)

Risk Management

27. No significant risks have been identified which will arise as a direct result of approving the LCWIP.
28. Risks of negative side effects associated with individual schemes which are promoted in the LCWIP may arise in future as and when those schemes are funded and progressed.
29. These scheme-specific risks will be identified in the relevant scheme's risk register during the early stages of that scheme's development, in order to ensure that an informed decision can be made on each scheme.
30. There are several risks associated with a decision *not* to approve the LCWIP:
- (a) risk of failure to achieve the goal set out in LTCP Policy 3a due both to the resulting delay to the Didcot LCWIP programme and to the potential knock-on delays to the development of other LCWIPs
 - (b) risk of failure to secure future funding for active travel infrastructure in the Didcot area from central government (due to the Department for Transport and Active Travel England's stated preferences for funding schemes which are identified in LCWIPs)
 - (c) risk of failure to secure adequate provision of active travel infrastructure from local developments (for which the LCWIP provides additional local policy backing), notably including the nearby local plan allocations at:
 - (1) Land at Berinsfield Garden Village (approximately 1,700 dwellings allocated in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035⁶)
 - (2) Land Adjacent to Culham Science Centre (approximately 3,500 dwellings allocated in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035⁶).

⁶ South Oxfordshire District Council, Adopted Local Plan 2035, available at: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2035/adopted-local-plan-2035/>

Consultation and engagement

31. Throughout the development of the LCWIP, engagement with local stakeholders was undertaken through the use of a steering group, which enabled key stakeholders to provide feedback and guidance at each stage of the LCWIP process. The group was composed of local (County, District and Town) council members, officers, and key local stakeholder organisations. A full list of these stakeholder organisations can be seen in paragraph 1.6.4 in the Didcot LCWIP report (Annex 1).
32. At the beginning of this project a Stage 1 Public Consultation was held (February to March 2023) where people with local knowledge could drop pins and comments on a map in locations they felt walking and or cycling improvements were needed. 400 people responded with 925 cycle specific comments and 386 walking specific comments. These were taken into account in the following stages of the LCWIP. More information available in Appendix A of the LCWIP document ('Didcot LCWIP Consultation Stage 1 Technical Note').
33. Upon completion of a full draft of the LCWIP, a wider public consultation exercise was undertaken (August to September 2023). The outcomes of the consultation are presented in a Stage 2 Public Consultation Outcomes Report (Annex 2).
34. As outlined in Stage 2 Public Consultation – Consultation Outcomes Report (Annex 2), reception of the draft LCWIP was positive, 81.3% of respondents reporting that they support the overall suggested Route Network, compared to 12.1% of respondents who oppose this. Only 6.6% of respondents neither support nor oppose the suggested Route Network. 97 people responded to this Stage 2 Public Consultation.
35. Feedback on the draft LCWIP received during the consultation resulted in a number of minor amendments to the LCWIP to ensure it meets the needs of local residents. Note that 400 people responded to the Stage 1 consultation and their comments were actioned as appropriate, therefore it was unsurprising that the Stage 2 consultation received fewer responses (97 people) as people may have noted their previous comments had been taken into account and therefore did not feel the need to comment further.
36. A further set of suggestions has been taken on board for consideration through the LCWIP review process (as described in paragraph 10 in this report). These are suggestions which require substantial further investigation before inclusion in the LCWIP, as outlined in Stage 2 Public Consultation – Consultation Outcomes Report (Annex 2).

Bill Cotton
Corporate Director for Environment and Place

Annex: Annex 1. Didcot LCWIP
 Annex 2. Stage 2 Public Consultation - Consultation
 Outcomes Report
 Annex 3. Equalities Impact Assessment
 Annex 4. Climate Impact Assessment

Background papers: Nil.

Other Documents: Nil.

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