

Divisions Affected: Didcot, Hendreds & Harwell, Sutton Courtenay & Marcham, Berinsfield & Garsington

CABINET - 22 JUNE 2021

DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND; IN PRINCIPLE USE OF STATUTORY POWERS

Report by Corporate Director Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- (a) approve in principle the development of The Oxfordshire County Council (Access to Didcot Garden Town) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x]. Negotiations for private acquisition will be conducted in parallel to the compulsory purchase process. Powers of compulsory purchase will be used only as a matter of last resort, in order to bring forward the timely development of the Housing Infrastructure Fund 1 (HIF1) project. Formal authority for the making of The Oxfordshire County Council (Access to Didcot Garden Town) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] will be reported to Cabinet following the submission of a planning application for the scheme;**
- (b) approve the preparation and service of statutory notices for the Requisition of Information pursuant to Section 16 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (as amended) to assist with determining the interests in the land required for the delivery of the scheme;**
- (c) approve the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council (Access to Didcot Garden Town) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] in draft, together with a draft Order Map, draft Order Schedule, draft Statement of Reasons and all necessary land referencing activity in advance of seeking formal authority to make the Order;**
- (d) approve the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council (Didcot to Culham Thames Bridge) Scheme 202[x] in accordance with section 106(3) of The Highways Act 1980 (as amended) in relation to a new road overbridge crossing of the River Thames, being a navigable waterway;**
- (e) approve the preparation of The Oxfordshire County Council (Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) – A4130 Improvement) (Side Roads) Order 202[x] (or multiple Side Roads Orders as may be necessary), and The Oxfordshire County Council (Didcot Garden Town Highways Infrastructure – A4130 Improvement) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x] to enable the stopping-up,**

diversion, amendment, improvement and creation of new lengths of highway or reclassification of existing highways. Please note that the final titles of the orders will be determined as the project progresses and will be updated in this report accordingly. This includes the stopping up of private means of access as necessary where the scheme design necessitates. Formal approval for the making of Side Roads Order(s) will be reported to Cabinet, and necessary approval sought, following the submission of a planning application for the scheme.

Executive Summary

1. This report is technical in nature due to the fact that it is intended to be used as a part of the documentary evidence base throughout the statutory processes to which it relates.
2. The Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund programme (hereon in referred to as HIF1) is to fund £218m of a £234m package of measures (the remaining funding - circa £16m - will come from developer obligations either held or secured by Oxfordshire County Council via section 106 agreements. Any funds not held at the time of construction will be forward funded by Oxfordshire County Council) consisting of four separate but interdependent highways schemes:
 - (a) A4130 widening from Milton Interchange to a new Science Bridge by making it a dual carriageway;
 - (b) a new Didcot Science Bridge from the A4130 over the Great Western Railway Mainline into the Didcot 'A' Power Station site and re-joining the A4130 Northern Perimeter Road north of the Purchas Road/Hawksworth roundabout;
 - (c) a new river crossing and link road between the A4130 at Didcot and A415 at Culham, including two new bridges;
 - (d) a Clifton Hampden Bypass between the A415 at Culham Science Centre and B4015 north of Clifton Hampden.
3. The grant funding will need to be spent by November 2024, as detailed in the Grant Determination Agreement (contract) with Homes England.
4. The HIF1 programme will directly unlock 11,711 new homes and support the delivery of more than 17,000 new homes in total in the Didcot Garden Town area. The residential units are across 12 separate sites in and around Didcot in South Oxfordshire (SODC) and Vale of White Horse (VoWHDC) districts.
5. The HIF objectives are to:
 - (a) Directly unlock the delivery of 11,711 new homes in the area, of which approximately 4,200 affordable homes;
 - (b) Support the delivery of approximately an additional 6,000 new homes;
 - (c) Support approximately 20,000 new jobs in the Science Vale area including unlocking jobs across existing and new employment sites in the area. The HIF1 infrastructure will unlock business rates contributions

- from Enterprise Zones to be reinvested back into the local economy as per the Enterprise Zone policy;
- (d) Ensure the impact of additional housing on the transport network is acceptable;
 - (e) Provide for real mode choice by future proofing new infrastructure;
 - (f) Reduce congestion in the parishes surrounding Didcot to the north;
 - (g) Ensure that growth in and around Didcot does not place undue pressure on the strategic road network (A34); and
 - (h) Support Didcot as a new and vibrant Garden Town by providing forward funding for the necessary infrastructure enabling funding from development etc. to potentially be spent on Garden Town aspirations. Additionally, in conjunction with other highway improvements in the area, the HIF1 infrastructure will help to minimise traffic through the centre of Didcot facilitating a different movement strategy in Didcot.
6. The HIF1 schemes are also essential for the economic and social prosperity of Science Vale UK, one of the first Enterprise Zones, in addition to other newer Enterprise Zones in the area. Whilst the HIF1 programme is based on future growth, the HIF1 infrastructure will also help to ameliorate the issues resulting from historic housing and employment growth.
 7. In the recovery phase of COVID-19, ensuring that Oxfordshire is able to make a significant contribution to the growth of the national economy is of the utmost importance. The timely delivery of the HIF1 programme is fundamental to realising this aim.
 8. Following a report to Cabinet in July 2020, the preferred options were agreed by Cabinet to proceed with the preliminary design and planning application for the scheme.
 9. Key milestone dates for the delivery of the project are outlined in Table 2 of this report.
 10. OCC's Local Transport Plan: Connecting Oxfordshire 2015-2031 was agreed by full council in September 2015, following public consultation on the draft plan earlier that year. This includes HIF1 schemes as specific proposals in policies, SV2.6, SV2.13, and SV2.16 within the Science Vale Transport Strategy.
 11. The schemes are also included in the policies of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and Part 2 (adopted) and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 (adopted). Both Local Plans include policies to safeguard land for these schemes and were consulted upon extensively with the public and through examination.

Background

12. The HIF1 infrastructure is the cornerstone of the Science Vale transport strategy and helps to support employment and growth ambitions in neighbouring Oxford City. It will benefit a large swathe of Oxfordshire residents that are required to travel from or into the Science Vale area for work, shopping and leisure. The

funding awarded will transform Didcot and the surrounding areas and will help deliver the Garden Town aspirations by forward funding essential highway infrastructure, which includes substantial improvements to pedestrian and cycle connectivity and will help to facilitate new and enhanced bus services.

13. The Didcot Garden Town HIF1 schemes are constituted of four key pieces of highway improvements: widening the A4130, Science Bridge, Didcot to Culham River Crossing and the Clifton Hampden Bypass. Although separate schemes, they must be delivered cohesively for their benefits to be fully realised.
14. Other priority areas, such as community facilities, affordable housing, and further walking and cycling infrastructure will be the focus of future bids and/or developer obligations that may not have been viable without HIF1 funding. Subject to the Cabinet resolution being sought, the County Council is committed to delivering the much-needed infrastructure and has already committed funding. In order to ensure HIF1 spend by Autumn 2024, the County Council cannot afford to pause or delay this programme.
15. OCC's Local Transport Plan: Connecting Oxfordshire 2015-2031 was agreed by full council in September 2015, following public consultation on the draft plan earlier that year. This includes HIF1 schemes as specific proposals in policies, SV2.6, SV2.13, and SV2.16 within the Science Vale Transport Strategy.
16. The Evaluation of Transport Impacts (ETI) which formed part of the evidence base for the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 identified the requirement for significant highway infrastructure intervention in order to support the delivery of homes and jobs growth in the area.
17. Subsequently, the ETI produced to support the submitted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 lends further weight to the need for these schemes. These ETIs were undertaken using the Oxfordshire Strategic Model (OSM).
18. The schemes are also included in the policies of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and Part 2 (adopted) and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 (submitted for examination). Both Local Plans include policies to safeguard land for these schemes and were consulted upon extensively with the public and through examination.
19. OCC held a consultation and public exhibitions in November 2018 to describe the need for these schemes, explain other options that were considered, and to show early indicative plans of the schemes. 307 responses were received. All information is available here: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/didcot and also noted in Appendix B. Feedback from this consultation has helped to inform scheme design.
20. Without the HIF1 infrastructure, the County Council cannot ensure an efficient and safe highway network. Such are the current pressures on the network that the County Council, as the Highway Authority, has objected to planning applications for very small residential developments (single dwellings or extensions) with an identified traffic impact on the river crossing at Culham

(comprised of Sutton Bridge and Culham Cut) on the grounds that traffic generated by these proposals would result in a severe impact on the highway network.

21. Four such applications have subsequently received planning committee refusals with the decisions then being tested at appeal. On each occasion, the Planning Inspectorate has upheld the decision of the local planning authority and dismissed the appeals due to the severe cumulative impact on the highway network as per Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
22. With the security of HIF funding, the County Council, together with its partners, can manage growth to enable residential and, importantly, commercial development in high tech sectors in the Science Vale area to progress, ensuring economic and jobs growth for residents of Oxfordshire.
23. To support delivery of the HIF1 programme of activity, Cabinet has previously authorised assembling the necessary land to support the scheme, including exercising compulsory purchase powers as a matter of last resort in the event that the land cannot be acquired by negotiation (23rd April 2019), along with adding the HIF1 programme to the capital programme following completion of a funding agreement (15th October 2019) with Homes England. The funding agreement was signed in late June 2020.
24. A further and more detailed report will be taken back to Cabinet to request a resolution to make and submit for confirmation to the Secretary of State for Transport The Oxfordshire County Council (Access to Didcot Garden Town) Compulsory Purchase Order 202[x], the [name of Bridging Scheme] and [name of SRO(s)], specifically for the HIF1 schemes, with that process to run in parallel to ongoing negotiations with those parties with land interests. Powers of compulsory purchase, should they be required and confirmed, would only be used as a matter of last resort to ensure the effective and timely delivery of the HIF1 schemes where the absence of a CPO would prevent that delivery.

The Need for the Scheme – Economic, Environmental and Social Benefits

25. To be produced along with the CPO and will be ready as scheme evolves. This section will be updated in due course.

Planning - Current Position

26. One planning application (Regulation 3 (Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992) Development) will be submitted for all four schemes. OCC intend to submit a planning application in summer 2021 with determination likely in winter 2022.

Progress to Date

27. The work undertaken to date to develop the project since the preferred options report to Cabinet has included:

- The development of the preliminary design and planning application including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
 - Engagement with key stakeholders to develop design and engineering options for elements of the scheme e.g. structural design and flood modelling etc.
 - Development of a robust scheme budget, risk management process and delivery programme, as set out within this report.
 - Consultation with the public and stakeholders at various stages of the scheme development to date.
 - The appointment of a number of technical specialists and contractors to deliver this and subsequent stages of the project.
28. In conjunction with all of the above, the land and property needed for the scheme to be delivered is being assessed. This has identified the need for the use of statutory powers in the form of:
- Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)
 - Side Roads Order (SRO)
 - Bridging Scheme
29. Powers of compulsory purchase will be used only as a matter of last resort in parallel to private treaty negotiations. This is in order to facilitate the timely delivery of the scheme where there would not be a reasonable prospect of delivery within the funding window (November 2024) in the absence of powers.

Programme

30. Due to the need to continue to develop and deliver the scheme at pace to limit further delays and also with the related funding window set out in the criteria in the contracted HIF1 Grant Determination Agreement, a defined programme to meet the tight critical paths is paramount.
31. The delivery programme has undergone a full review up to construction, with Early Contractor Involvement secured to advise on buildability and the construction programme. A number of 'critical friends' and key delivery partners have also been procured to advise on various disciplines. The programme is being continually updated as the project progresses, in line with Council internal governance requirements.
32. Key milestones through to successful scheme delivery are set out within Table 2.
33. The critical path to the delivery of the HIF1 project is to successfully acquire all of the necessary land and new rights required for the delivery of the scheme. At present, the programme reflects a worst-case position that the orders (or any number of them) will be contested with the likely need for Public Inquiry. Regardless of the need for a Public Inquiry the Secretary of State for Transport will need to approve the orders.
34. Acquiring authorities should acknowledge and understand that every effort should be made to acquire the necessary land interests and new rights by

private agreement with the affected parties and that **compulsory acquisition is a matter of last resort**. The Council has appointed external property agents and CPO legal specialists to undertake this work. However, acquisitions by negotiated agreement of all of the land affected and new rights required may not be possible within the funding window for this scheme and are, therefore, a key risk to its delivery.

35. Whilst acquisition by agreement will be diligently pursued, from a timescale perspective, initiating the CPO process over the entire land holding that is required to implement the scheme offers certainty, should parallel negotiations to acquire the land and new rights by agreement be unsuccessful. This is particularly important considering the funding window within which this scheme needs to be delivered.

Table 2 – Proposed Key Milestones HIF1

Activity	Date
Cabinet – in principle use of statutory powers	June 2021
Public engagement	Aug / Sept 2021
Planning application submission	Aug / Sept 2021
Detailed design commences	December 2021
Cabinet – resolution to make CPO/SRO/Bridging Scheme	October 2021
Planning determination	Early 2022
Detailed design complete	Late 2022
Possession of land	March / April 2023
Construction start	March / April 2023
ALL Construction Complete	Late 2024

36. COVID-19 programme effects moving forward have been included as far as reasonably practicable within the timescales indicated above. The potential ongoing effect is discussed further within the Risk Management section of this report.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

37. The delivery of the HIF1 project will actively support the following key themes within Oxfordshire County Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24;
- (a) **Providing services that enhance the quality of life and protect the local environment** – will promote the modal shift away from private cars and into the more sustainable modes of travel of public transport, cycling and walking. This will be for both existing traffic as well as supporting future development in the area, enabling a culture change from the outset driven by the provision of quality infrastructure, rather than attempting to 'retrofit' afterwards. Reducing congestion and traffic through historic Oxfordshire villages to improve the quality of life for its residents. A bio-diversity net gain of at least 10% will be achieved on the scheme

- (b) **Supporting a thriving local economy by improving transport links to create jobs and homes for the future** – will directly provide enhanced highway capacity including for active travel and public transport, improved journey times for all, improved connectivity and reliability of public transport provision in and around Didcot. The scheme will unlock thousands of new homes and jobs, ensuring the highway network can cope with existing and predicted demand by all modes.
- (c) **Taking action against Climate Change** – by reducing congestion and promoting modal shift in how people travel in and around Didcot will translate into clear benefits in terms of reducing carbon emissions, promoting ‘zero carbon travel’ and improving air quality in the area.

Financial Implications

Project Costs

38. The following is a high-level breakdown of the current project costs, reviewed in detail at end of April 2021;
- Stage 2 Design & Procurement – £19m
 - Stage 3 Construction / Delivery – £107m
 - Stage 4 Closeout – £0 (included in risk and contingency fund)
39. All figures are inclusive of the appropriate inflation allowances.
40. The risks associated with scheme delivery are underwritten by a £106m quantified risk and contingency fund which are accounted for separately within the overall forecast budget. However, with reference to the capped costs and funding availability within the Grant Determination Agreement with Homes England, any costs over and above the agreed funding envelope or that fall outside of the agreed timescales would need to be met by the Council. These additional costs would need to be met by reprioritising the capital programme or borrowing to fund the pressure. A letter of assurance has been signed by the section 151 officer for HIF1 confirming that Oxfordshire County Council has the ability to cover any cost increases in order to complete the project should the risk materialise.
41. The current and approved expenditure forecast indicates that between June and November 2024 expenditure for all four HIF1 schemes will be between approximately £6m and £8m per month. Depending on the length of delay (assuming between one and six months), without Homes England approving an extension, the funding exposure to the Council will be between £6m and £48m.
42. The total HIF1 scheme cost to completion is **£234m**.

Project Funding

43. The Didcot Garden Town HIF1 programme is to fund £218m of a £234m package of measures (the remaining funding - circa £16m - will come from developer obligations).
44. The Council entered into the Grant Determination Agreement in June 2020 to secure funding from the HIF programme.
45. The funding is in place to cover the whole scheme costs to deliver the HIF1 programme of works.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

Statutory Powers

46. Members should note that whilst the Council has compulsory purchase powers as an acquiring Authority, under the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981, as referenced elsewhere in this report, these powers should be used as a matter of last resort. Dialogue with affected landowners has commenced and will continue in parallel to acquire by negotiation as a first principle.
47. While an Authority can use compulsory purchase powers where it is expedient to do so, in considering whether to confirm the CPO, the Secretary of State will need to be convinced that there is a “compelling case in the public interest for compulsory acquisition”. Members should therefore apply a similar test before authorising the in-principle decision to use these powers based on the balance of the information contained in this report. This is in the knowledge that a further report will be brought to Cabinet at a later date seeking authority to make the formal statutory Order itself.
48. The acquiring Authority is also expected to show that if compulsory acquisition is authorised the scheme is unlikely to be blocked by physical or legal impediments to deliverability. These include related infrastructure works, funding and the need for planning permission, the position of all of which are covered under various sections of this report.
49. Members should also note that once the CPO is made (following any future Cabinet authority required), those parties with an interest in the land and the public generally have a right to object to the CPO (and SRO) and, if so decided by the Secretary of State for Transport, have their objections heard at a local Public Inquiry. As Acquiring Authority, the Council must make the case for confirmation of the CPO to the Secretary of State but, if heard in a public Inquiry, the case will be made and tested in this forum. The CPO does not take effect until confirmed by the Secretary of State. Confirmation of the CPO affords the Acquiring Authority the power to compulsorily acquire land, but those powers have to be actively engaged, which has statutory minimum time periods for taking possession of land. Once the Order is confirmed, any party aggrieved by

the decision has a further six weeks from the first date of public notification of the confirmation in the local press to challenge the decision in the High Court on a point of law, often referred to as statutory Judicial Review. This could result in the Order, or the decision to confirm it, being quashed in whole or in part. The same principles of statutory challenge apply in relation to the Side Roads Order.

50. The principal powers in the Highways Act 1980 are, but not limited to;
- (a) Section 14 and 125 (SROs)
 - (b) Section 106(3) (Bridging Scheme)
 - (c) Section 239(1), which provides that a highway authority may acquire land required for the construction of a highway which is to be maintainable at the public expense;
 - (d) Section 239(3) which allows a highway authority to acquire land for the improvement of a highway being an improvement which the authority is authorised to make under the Act;
 - (e) Section 240, which allows the acquisition of land in relation to an order under Section 14
 - (f) Section 246 authorises the acquisition of land for the purpose of mitigating the adverse effects of the construction or improvement of highways;
 - (g) Section 250 authorises the compulsory acquisition of new rights over land; and
 - (h) Section 260 authorises the clearance of the title to land already held by the Council and required for the scheme and which might otherwise interfere with the Council's activities in exercising its statutory powers to construct the works.

though it should be noted that a full assessment of appropriate Highways Act powers will be included in the Report to Cabinet for the making of the CPO and SRO in due course.

51. Some of the areas over which freehold title is to be acquired may not be required for the permanent works and may be offered back to the current owners at Open Market Value under the Crichel Down Rules, providing that certain criteria are met. There is no obligation on these parties to purchase the land back and so the Council should assume that all land will be retained, whether surplus or not, and budget accordingly.
52. The SRO will authorise the stopping-up, amendment, diversion, improvement and creation of new lengths of highway or reclassification of existing highways and the CPO will include land that is required to enable the works authorised by the SRO to be carried out. The SRO gives authority to the CPO and the CPO cannot, therefore, be made without the SRO having first been made (i.e., sealed and executed by the Council) though this will happen immediately consecutively.
53. In addition, the SRO may make provision for the stopping-up and (where appropriate) re-provision of private means of access to premises and

agricultural land. The CPO makes provision for the acquisition of land and new rights to enable new, replacement private means of access pursuant to the CPO, to be provided as part of the scheme.

54. It should be noted that the confirmation of compulsory purchase powers does not require that those powers be used nor does it acquire the land interests; it only provides the ability to use them. The Acquiring Authority has a duty to continue to try to acquire all necessary interests by private treaty agreement, where possible, with powers of compulsory purchase being used only as a matter of last resort. There is a statutory process pertaining to the implementation of powers, which will be reported to Cabinet when authority to make the CPO is sought later in 2021.
55. There may also be a requirement for both permanent and temporary traffic regulation orders (TROs) to enable the scheme, however, Cabinet approval is not required to implement these.

Requests for Information

56. In order to pursue a compulsory purchase order, Acquiring Authorities must undertake diligent enquiry to ascertain the land interests that exist in relation to each parcel of land required to facilitate the delivery of the scheme. The Council has engaged land referencing specialists to undertake this work, which feeds into the Order Map and Order Schedule.
57. Albeit that much of the information regarding interests in land can be discovered from investigation of the information held at HM Land Registry, one of the key components of land referencing is the ability to request information directly from the parties known from the desktop referencing process. These requests take the form of statutory requisitions for information pursuant to Section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (as amended).
58. Such requisitions provide for a minimum 14-day period from receipt for a response, though authorities often provide a longer period. Non-response to a statutory requisition for information is a criminal offence and it is for this reason that the approval of Cabinet to the service of these notices is sought, over and above the delegated powers to officers in the Council's Standing Order. It should be noted that any action taken as a result of an offence being committed is entirely at the discretion of the Council.

Human Rights

59. The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated into domestic law the European Convention on Human Rights ("the Convention"). The Convention includes provisions in the form of Articles, the aim of which is to protect the rights of the individual.
60. The following articles of the Convention are relevant to the determination as to whether a compulsory purchase order should be confirmed:

- (a) Article 1 of the First Protocol protects the right of everyone to peaceful enjoyment of possessions. No one can be deprived of their possessions except in the public interest and subject to the relevant national and international laws. Any interference with possessions must be proportionate and, in determining whether a particular measure is proportionate, a fair balance must be struck between the public benefit sought and the interference with the rights in question;
 - (b) Article 6 entitles those affected by the powers sought in any CPO to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal;
 - (c) Article 8 protects the right of the individual to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence. A public authority cannot interfere with these interests unless such interference is in accordance with the law and is necessary in the interests of, inter alia, national security, public safety or the economic wellbeing of the country.
61. Any CPO has the potential to infringe the human rights of persons who own property in the Order Land. Such infringement is authorised by law provided:
- (a) the statutory procedures for obtaining the Order are followed and there is a compelling case in the public interest for any CPO; and
 - (b) any intervention with the Convention right is proportionate to the legitimate aim served.
62. A full consideration of human rights implications of the Scheme will be considered when reporting to Cabinet in October 2021 for authority to make the CPO.

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

63. The resource requirements to successfully deliver HIF1 will come from existing project and technical management functions, primarily within the Growth and Economy Directorate. This will be supported by other disciplines from across the Council organisation as the need arises.
64. Specialist legal advisors are already engaged to provide support to the CPO and other such statutory processes to limit the potential for future challenge to an absolute minimum. Additionally, a specialist surveying company has been engaged to undertake land referencing and valuation.
65. The forecast Council staffing costs of project and technical management to completion are contained within the total budget quoted within this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

66. The equalities implications of the HIF1 scheme will be assessed robustly through the design development stages of the scheme. These equalities implications will be considered in line with the Equality Act 2010 and through the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) as part of the development of the HIF1 and wider A40 programme.
67. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), to which the County Council is also subject, places additional obligations on public sector bodies to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Recognising and complying with these higher standards is required to discharge the PSED. In particular, steps must be taken to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share that characteristic.
68. Work towards this has already taken the form of considering the safety of all pedestrians, cyclists, and horse-riders through a Walking, Cycling and Horse-Riding Assessment & Review which will form part of the information presented at planning. This continual review and development process will ensure that the protected characteristics, particularly those of age and disability, are considered appropriately in the design of the schemes through the provision of suitable crossing facilities and segregated routes of a high standard along all of the schemes. Further to this, by facilitating new bus services and better access to urban and rural areas for non-motorised users, the needs of all people are being addressed. Reviewing the EqIA and the County Council's PSED will be a continuous process throughout the development of the scheme.

Sustainability Implications

69. The HIF1 proposals are designed to promote sustainable modes of travel for access into and around Didcot by commuting traffic by modal shift away from the private vehicle and on to public transport or by walking and cycling. High-quality pedestrian and cycling infrastructure will be provided along the full length of the scheme with new routes setting the conditions for new bus services between Oxford, Culham, Didcot and Harwell. In reducing traffic congestion levels this has positive impacts on air quality and carbon emissions.
70. Similar to the above, the successful delivery of the project, will form a core part of the promotion and early enabling the use of more sustainable forms of travel for the existing and new developments (new homes and employment) planned for the Didcot area. This will be teamed with promotional activities to achieve the cultural shift required. The forward funding element of the HIF1 project funds the essential infrastructure that would have been required from development sites to mitigate harm and will therefore enable developments to concentrate their resources on sustainable travel modes to/from their sites as primary mitigation.
71. The project has been developed to be as sustainable as possible in terms of its impact on the environment by using the likes of sustainable urban drainage

systems as a core part of its design development to date, non-statutory 10% biodiversity net gain provisions and appropriate levels of flood compensation.

72. During the next stages of scheme delivery there will be specific sustainability targets imposed on the design and build contractor with the likes of re-use of site won materials as an example of how additional temporary environmental impacts during construction will be reduced.

Risk Management

73. A risk register has been maintained as part of the project plan. The main risk to the delivery of the schemes is delay to the programme. The funding must be spent by November 2024. Any delay to the programme will see the County Council fail to meet this deadline. This risk and the others identified on the Risk Register are being managed by officers working closely with the professional services commissioned by OCC to deliver this scheme.
74. Emerging risks will be escalated through the capital governance process to ensure that issues and risks arising and impact on the Council are considered and managed.
75. COVID-19 currently poses an unquantifiable risk to the project's future delivery programme, as well as the associated knock on impact to the HIF1 funding agreement. COVID-19 impacts will be closely monitored and implications on programme reported.
76. For more information refer to Appendix A.

Communications

77. There is a detailed communications and engagement plan in place for the project. The purpose of this is to ensure consistency of approach across the wider HIF1 programme, ensuring that this is seen as a joined up complementary investment programme.
78. The communication and engagement plan have also been informed by a series of public consultations over the course of the scheme development, notably (but not restricted to) engagement events in November 2018 and March/April 2020. A further public engagement/information event is planned prior to the planning application submission. Formal responses will be considered through the statutory consultation associated with the planning application process.
79. The projects webpage has recently been launched (link below).
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/roadworks/future-transport-projects/didcot-infrastructure-fund>
80. OCC has commissioned AECOM to provide user friendly GA drawings and video fly-throughs. Once received these will be uploaded to the website.
81. This has been supported by a number of engagements via the following forums;

- Member briefings on-going throughout scheme development.
 - On-going District and Parish Council meetings since summer 2020.
 - Submission of OCC response paper to Appleford Parish Council position paper, follow up meeting attended by HIF1 team and Cllr Hudspeth.
 - Responses to circa. 30 Appleford Residents emails/letters.
 - Communication email sent to key stakeholders regarding intrusive survey mobilisation and programme of works.
 - Landowner engagement has been ongoing since early 2020 seeking acquisition by negotiation.
 - Further key user group meetings to explain scheme design and gain buy in to proposals set up for Q2 2021.
 - Discussions with adjacent land / property owners being set up for Q2 2021.
 - Preparation for public engagement event in summer 2021 currently being planned prior to submission of a planning application. Options for virtual and face to face subject to COVID restrictions being explored.
 - Proactive engagement with statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England to ensure that any scheme impacts are carefully and comprehensively mitigated.
 - Engagement with developers of adjacent sites to ensure works are co-ordinated from both technical and practical perspectives.
82. For Consultation Response Report, see Appendix B. A frequently asks questions (FAQ) and glossary related to this consultation can be found at Appendix B1.
83. There is a clear understanding of the importance of continuing to develop this communications and engagement plan, strengthening relationships with all stakeholders in the process.

BILL COTTON

Corporate Director for Environment and Place

Annex: Appendix A – Risk Management and Strategic Risk Register
Appendix B – Consultation Response Report
Appendix B1 – FAQs and Glossary

Background papers: Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund:
Preferred Scheme Alignments – July 2020

Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund DRAFT
HEADS OF TERMS – October 2019

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