

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

**1 MAY 2026**

**DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (HIF1)  
– DIDCOT TO CULHAM RIVER CROSSING CONSTRUCTION  
CONTRACT**

**Report by Director of Environment and Highways**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- a) **Delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Highways to award the Stage Two NEC4 Engineering and Construction Contract for the HIF1 Didcot to Culham River Crossing scheme to John Graham Construction Limited under the Crown Commercial Service Construction Works and Associated Services Framework RM6088, Lot 5 (National Lot across all UK regions) subject to:**
  - (i) **agreement of the target cost,**
  - (ii) **agreement of the programme for the works,**
  - (iii) **finalising the contract terms and**
  - (iv) **confirmation that sufficient funding is allocated.**
  
- b) **Delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Highways to enter into a Works and Access Agreement relating to land at Sutton Courtenay with FCC Environment UK Limited (FCC) and a two Party Overbridge Agreement and a Restoration Agreement with Hanson Quarry Products Europe Limited.**

**Executive Summary**

1. This report seeks a delegation to the Director of Environment & Highways to award and enter into the Stage 2 main construction contract for the Didcot to Culham River Crossing scheme, one of three major infrastructure projects within the Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) programme.
  
2. The Didcot to Culham River Crossing 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 to Culham River Crossing scheme was approved at Major Infrastructure Board on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and noted at Strategic Capital and Commercial Board (SCCB) on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026. It is being updated and will be taken to Major Infrastructure Board on the 28<sup>th</sup> April and Strategic Capital and Commercial Board on the 7<sup>th</sup> May. The contract will only be awarded if there is sufficient project funding, including suitable contingency and inflation allowances.
4. The Stage Two construction contract is an NEC4 Engineering and Construction Contract (ECC) Option C and will be funded primarily through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant, supplemented by approved Council capital allocations, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and S106 contributions.

## **Background**

5. The Didcot to Culham River Crossing is a new road connecting the A4130 at Didcot with the A415 at Culham, including a bridge over the River Thames and another bridge over a private rail siding, and connections to Appleford and Sutton Courtenay via the B4106, all with segregated walking and cycling facilities.
6. The scheme forms part of the wider HIF1 Access to Didcot Garden Town Programme, which also includes:
  - Didcot Science Bridge
  - Clifton Hampden Bypass
7. Planning permission for Didcot to Culham River Crossing 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.
8. 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, which is released at Homes England's discretion.
9. The contractor's estimated cost to complete construction is circa £151m, with the target cost still to be agreed.

## **Key Issues**

10. 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.
11. Delay in contract award would risk non-delivery of key milestones, loss of confidence from funders, and potential withdrawal of grant funding.

12. 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.
13. 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, to the south of the A4130 close to the Milton Interchange and to the north of Didcot in the vicinity of Collett Roundabout.

## **Procurement Strategy**

14. The Procurement Strategy recommended that:

- Detailed design and construction should be procured via the Crown Commercial Services framework (CCS) with a mini competition.
- The contract should be in two stages (detailed design & construction) using a Professional Services Contract (PSC) Option A for detailed design and an Engineering Construction Contract (ECC) using Option C for construction, with the option of using Engineering Construction Short Contracts (ECSC) for any enabling works.

15. A competitive tender under the Crown Commercial Service Construction Works and Associated Services Framework RM6088, Lot 5 (National Lot across all UK regions) was undertaken whereby three separate contracts are awarded to John Graham Construction Limited. Three Stage One Contracts were awarded:

- PSC detailed design and early contractor involvement (30.06.23)
- ECSC ground investigation works (22.01.25)
- ECSC pre-order of steel (20.01.26)

The Stage Two contract for the main construction works is to be awarded pending agreement on the construction programme and a target cost for the works.

## **Financial Implications**

16. The revised total cost of stage 3 construction and within that total cost, the specific construction cost now estimated to be £151m, is greater than the funding allocated to the project in the last approved and SCCB noted Full Business Case. However, it is important to note that although the project is fully funded through the Grant Determination Agreement (GDA), Homes England (HE) still have to formally approve an allocation from their contingency funding, in line with that GDA. This approval process is currently in progress and the level of HE contingency is sufficient to cover the project cost reported above.

17. Although there is a lead-time between approving the decision in this paper and the allocation of the HE contingency, the decision to award the contract is

conditional of sufficient funding being allocated. As such the decision poses no financial risk to the authority.

Comments checked by: Rob Finlayson, Strategic Finance Business Partner  
([rob.finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:rob.finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk))

## **Legal Implications**

18. The Council is acting in its capacity as the highway authority for Oxfordshire under the Highways Act 1980 in respect of the delivery of the Didcot to Culham River Crossing scheme.
19. A mini competition under the Crown Commercial Service Construction Works and Associated Services Framework RM6088, Lot 5 (National Lot across all UK regions) was undertaken in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. A single tendering exercise provided for a two-stage process whereby four separate contracts are awarded to one contractor. The successful contractor was John Graham Construction Limited. Stage One contracts were awarded for detailed design and early contractor involvement (a Professional Service Contract), site investigation and enabling works (an Engineering and Construction Short Contract) and pre-order of steel (an Engineering and Construction Short Contract). The Stage Two contract for the main construction works is to be awarded pending agreement on the construction programme and a target cost for the works.
20. In connection with the main construction works the Council is entering into agreements with several Stakeholders details of which are set out below:

### Works and Access Agreement relating to land at Sutton Courtenay

FCC Environment UK Limited (FCC) grant of rights to the Council in relation to the carrying out of main construction works and agree to the dedication of their land for the Council to build upon. The Council agrees to adopt the main works that are to be built on FCC's dedicated land after completion of the works.

### Restoration Agreement relating to land at Bridge Farm Quarry

Hanson Quarry Products Europe Limited grants right to the Council in relation to restoring the wetlands area known as the Finger Lakes, following completion of the HIF1 works. This Agreement enables Hanson Quarry Products Europe Limited to fulfil their own planning condition discharge requirements in relation to the completed wetland area.

### Two Party Overbridge Agreement

Hanson Quarry Products Europe Limited grants right to the Council for the design, construction and maintenance of a bridge to be constructed over a private railway siding owned by Hanson Quarry Products Europe Limited.

Comments checked by: Jayne Pringle – Principal Solicitor (Contracts)  
[Jayne.pringle@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jayne.pringle@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **Insurance requirements**

25. The main NEC4 contract insurances have all been confirmed through Oxfordshire County Council insurance team and are acceptable to the contractor.

## **Staff Implications**

26. 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**

27. 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**

28. 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**

29. The projects programme overview is as below:

- Receipt of Planning Approval: Dec 2024
- Main Contractor into Contract: May 2026
- Land Acquisition: May 2026
- Enabling Works: Sep 2025 – Apr 2026  
(steel delivery extends beyond April 2026)
- Main Construction: May 2026 – Oct 2028 (TBC)
- Infrastructure Start on Site: May 2026
- Homes England: End of funding period: Mar 2028

## **Risk Management**

30. The current total risk allowance for the Didcot to Culham River Crossing scheme is £8.775 million (5.8% of total stage 3 costs). 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**

31. 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, developers and affected local businesses. No further consultation is planned.
32. 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:**

Lynsey Turner – Senior Project Manager, HIF1 Programme  
[Lynsey.turner@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Lynsey.turner@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

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