

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

16 JULY 2026

HIF2 - Wolvercote Bridge Strengthening and Maintenance Works Scheme

Report by Director of Environment & Highways

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to

- a) **Approve the award of contract (NEC4 Engineering and Construction Contract, Pricing Option C with secondary Option X22), to M-Group Highways Limited (reg#13007933) for an estimated total value of £4,855,610 (ex VAT), for the HIF2 – Wolvercote Bridge Strengthening and Maintenance Works Scheme under the Pagabo Civil and Infrastructure Framework (Lot 1).**

Executive Summary

1. The Council's Constitution states that key decisions are required prior to entering into any contracts with a capital spend of over £2 million.
2. This report recommends that Cabinet Member approves the award of contract (NEC4 Engineering and Construction Contract, Pricing Option C with secondary Option X22), to M-Group Highways Limited (reg#13007933) for an estimated total value of £4,855,610 (ex VAT), for the HIF2 – Wolvercote Bridge Strengthening and Maintenance Works Scheme under the Pagabo Civil and Infrastructure Framework (Lot 1)
3. The estimated cost for Stage 1 is £776,556. In Stage One the Contractor provides early Contractor involvement and enabling works services, working collaboratively with the Client, the Project Manager and the Designer (AECOM) to develop the design information, methodology, programme and target price for Stage Two. Stage Two is the full construction stage and will follow a Notice to Proceed instruction from the Director of Environment and Highways providing the total estimated contract value of £4,855,610 is not exceeded.
4. The NEC Option X22 enables the Council to either terminate the contract at the end of Stage 1 or proceed to Stage 2 and commence the construction works.

5. A Cabinet Member Decision is required to award the contract and enable to Council to proceed with Stage 1 mobilisation works, required to commence by mid-August, noting that these works are constrained by Network Rail possession availability. Early mobilisation is critical to reduce programme and cost pressures; completion of these enabling works will inform the full scope and support timely delivery of the scheme, and maintain alignment with interdependent projects, including the HIF2 – Eynsham to Wolvercote scheme, which is similarly constrained by seasonal requirements.

Background and Objectives

6. The A40 corridor strategy aims to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and support the delivery of 4,813 new homes in West Oxfordshire. The HIF2 - Wolvercote Bridge Strengthening and Maintenance Works specifically addresses capacity and connectivity at the Wolvercote Railway Bridge, including the removal of concrete encasing steel frames, parapet and edge beam works, installation of a Vehicular Restraint System (VRS), and concrete repairs to abutment walls. These works are essential to enable the delivery of housing and support employment growth in line with the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and Oxfordshire's Housing Growth Deal. The scheme unlocks crucial strength capacity to complete the works on the top side of the Wolvercote Bridge for the HIF2 A40 – Eynsham to Wolvercote Scheme.

Procurement and Delivery

7. The contract is procured via the Pagabo Civil and Infrastructure Framework (Lot 1), using an NEC4 Engineering and Construction Contract with Option C (Target Price) and Option X22 (Early Contractor Involvement). The contract will consist of two stages: Stage 1 will confirm and validate the full scope, the construction methodology, the full programme, the risk allowances and agree the target price; and Stage 2 will deliver the main works following approval to proceed.
8. All design services relating to the construction works, including the Principal Designer role, are and will continue to be undertaken by AECOM under a separate NEC4 PSC contract with the Council.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

9. This Scheme supports Oxfordshire County Council's Corporate Plan by enabling sustainable travel, reducing congestion, and supporting new housing and economic growth. The project aligns with the Council's vision for a greener, fairer, and healthier county, delivering improved transport infrastructure that benefits residents, businesses, and the wider community.

Financial Implications

10. The total estimated final cost of the HIF2 – Wolvercote Bridge Strengthening and Maintenance Works Scheme is £6.502m. This is funded by £5m from Council-approved highways maintenance reserves, as agreed by Cabinet in January 2026, and £1.502m from the HIF fund. The scheme budget includes a construction contingency of £508,000 to manage project risks.
11. The contract award to M Group Highways Limited is for £4,855,610 under the Pagabo Civil and Infrastructure Framework (Lot 1), using NEC4 ECC Option C (Target Price Contract).
12. There are no additional budgetary implications, as all required funding has been previously approved.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

13. This is a key decision as defined in paragraph 3(b) of Part 1.3 of the Council's Constitution.
14. This report recommends an award of a works contract to M Group Highways Ltd with an estimated total value of £4,855,610 for the delivery of the Wolvercote Bridge Strengthening and Maintenance Works. The Contract will comprise mobilisation works (Stage 1 with an estimated value of £776,556) and the main construction works (Stage 2). Following completion of the Stage 1 works the Council may elect to proceed to Stage 2 of the Contract (the Council is not obliged to do so) by issuing the Contractor with a Notice to Proceed under the Contract.
15. During Stage 1 of the contract, the parties will develop and seek to agree on the Tendered Total of the Prices for Stage 2 (the Target Price) based on the Pricing Information and the Secondary Option X22 Budget (which has been set at £4,855m) together with the Stage 2 Scope and programme, prior to the issue of any Notice to Proceed for the main construction works. No Notice to Proceed will be issued unless and until a further decision is taken by the Director of Environment and Highways. Where the Target Price exceeds the estimated contract value of £4.855 million, further approval will be needed in accordance with the Council's governance procedures.
16. As the total estimated value of the proposed construction works contract exceeds the applicable works threshold of £5,193,000 (including VAT), the Council is required to procure the works through a lawful and compliant route to market in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015), where

applicable, or the Procurement Act 2023 (PA 2023), and in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

17. The proposed route to market for the award of the works contract is by way of a call-off under the Pagabo Civil and Infrastructure Framework (Lot 1) 2022–2026 (being a framework established pursuant to the PCR 2015, extended to the end of September 2026). The PA 2023 expressly permits contracting authorities to continue awarding call-off contracts under framework agreements established under the PCR 2015, including the Pagabo Civil and Infrastructure Framework 2022–2026. The proposed award route is therefore a lawful and available procurement route for the purposes of this contract.
18. In delivering the construction of the Wolvercote Bridge Strengthening and Maintenance Works scheme, the Council is acting in its statutory capacity as the highway authority for Oxfordshire pursuant to the Highways Act 1980.

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Staff Implications

19. There are no staff implications.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

20. In planning, delivering, monitoring, and evaluating this scheme, equality and diversity issues have been appropriately considered from the outset. The Scheme has been screened for relevance against statutory duties to promote equality, and an Equality and Community Impact Assessment (ECIA) has been completed in line with Council guidance.

Sustainability Implications

21. The Scheme supports the Council's climate and ecological commitments by promoting sustainable travel and reducing congestion and emissions. A Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) has been completed, and the scheme aligns with the Council's objectives for climate action.

Risk Management

22. Key risks include Network Rail possession scheduling, unknown site conditions, and programme dependencies with other A40 schemes. The chosen contract form (Option C) provides flexibility to manage these uncertainties. A detailed risk assessment has been undertaken, and mitigation measures are in place to minimise risks to the Council.

Consultations

23. Extensive engagement with Network Rail, utility companies, relevant service directorates within the Council, and elected members has been undertaken to ensure alignment and minimise disruption to neighbouring works and key stakeholders. All points of substance raised during consultations have been considered and addressed in the development of this scheme.

Paul Fermer
Director of Environment and Highways

Annex: [Annex A – Project Details](#)

Background papers: Nil

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