

1. Overview

The Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan is an exciting opportunity to make the town an even better place to be. This chapter provides an introduction to the plan and an overview of the chapters within it.

1. Overview

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INNOVATION CENTRE

Cyclists outside Milton Park Innovation Centre © MEPC

1.1.1 Foreword

The decision to branch a line off the Great Western Railway from Didcot to Oxford meant that a rural village was destined to become an important regional hub. The grand 19th century vision, and the choices made to implement it, have strongly shaped Didcot into what it is today.

And so it is our hope that the decision to seek garden town status for Didcot will be equally instrumental in shaping the town for decades, if not centuries, to come. Already, with the next phase of the Orchard Centre having started, we are seeing the benefits of being a growing town. However, as more and more people call Didcot their home, we know there is work to do to address the infrastructure deficits of the past as well as making Didcot a 21st century place to work and bring up a family. This delivery plan is offered as a programme of ideas to address those demands.

The plan aims to tackle all of the key areas: housing, jobs, transport, landscape and the environment - within the context of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' emerging local plans. It does not aim to change these documents, for example, by changing land allocations or reducing the number of houses to be built on allocated sites.

Just as the railway and power station have defined the town now, and once fully implemented, we believe the ideas put forward in this delivery plan will make Didcot Garden Town widely recognised as a place that achieves the right balance between growth and green space.

Creating this delivery plan has not been a simple task given that garden towns were originally planned and built from scratch on green fields. Didcot is an existing community that has not been developed according to garden town principles. Applying these principles and transforming Didcot into a garden town is therefore a much more challenging task. This is why the views of residents, businesses and stakeholders have been taken into account through an extensive public engagement and a formal public consultation process resulting in many constructive contributions being made to the delivery plan before this version was produced. A number of significant challenges still need to be overcome if the ideas set out in the plan are to be taken through to reality. Our first major challenge will be to establish a governance structure that is inclusive, representative of all interests and capable of maintaining public engagement throughout.

The plan is not a formal planning policy document and has limited weight when determining future planning applications. The ideas and proposals within the delivery plan document will, therefore, need to be incorporated into a formal Didcot Garden Town Development Plan Document (DPD) or a similar Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as quickly as possible. This will involve up to two years further work by the district councils planning teams and will afford local residents, and other interested parties, a further opportunity to influence plans by engaging with the DPD production process.

A further major challenge will be to secure sufficient government funding support, alongside private and other public sector investment, to help implement key projects within the delivery plan.

Our organisations are ready to overcome these and other challenges and play our part in making sure Didcot grows in a sustainable manner, where facilitating new developments, creating a vibrant town centre, improving connectivity and providing high quality green spaces are viewed as equally important to Didcot's future wellbeing.

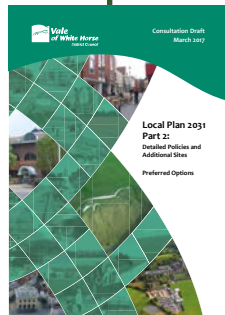
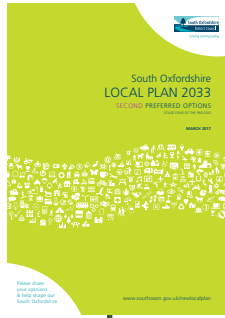
					
Mark Stone Acting Chief Executive, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils	John Cotton Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council	Rt Hon Ed Vaizey MP Member of Parliament for Wantage and Didcot	Peter Clark Chief Executive, Oxfordshire County Council	Matthew Barber Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council	Nigel Tipple Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
					
Kevin Bourner General Manager, South West, Homes and Communities Agency	Ian Hudspeth Leader, Oxfordshire County Council	Jeremy Long Chair, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership	Robert Simister Lead Cabinet Member for Development and Regeneration, South Oxfordshire District Council	Bill Service Leader, Didcot Town Council	Michael Murray Lead Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Development and Property, Vale of White Horse District Council
					
	Elizabeth Paris Chair of Didcot Garden Town Board				

1.1.2 The delivery plan process

The delivery plan has been formed through a process of consultation, research, masterplanning and delivery planning. The following stages of work are explained in the relevant chapters of this document.

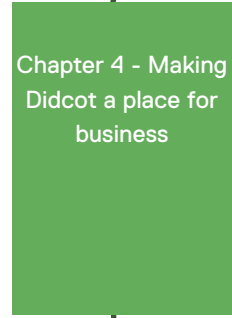
Local plans

At an early stage the team worked with the district councils to establish high level principles for the garden town. These garden town masterplan principles were embedded in the emerging local plans and formed the foundation for the more detailed work in the delivery plan.



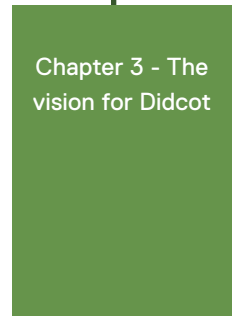
Research, studies and analysis

The business environment was studied, considering what can be done to support local businesses, jobs and investment.



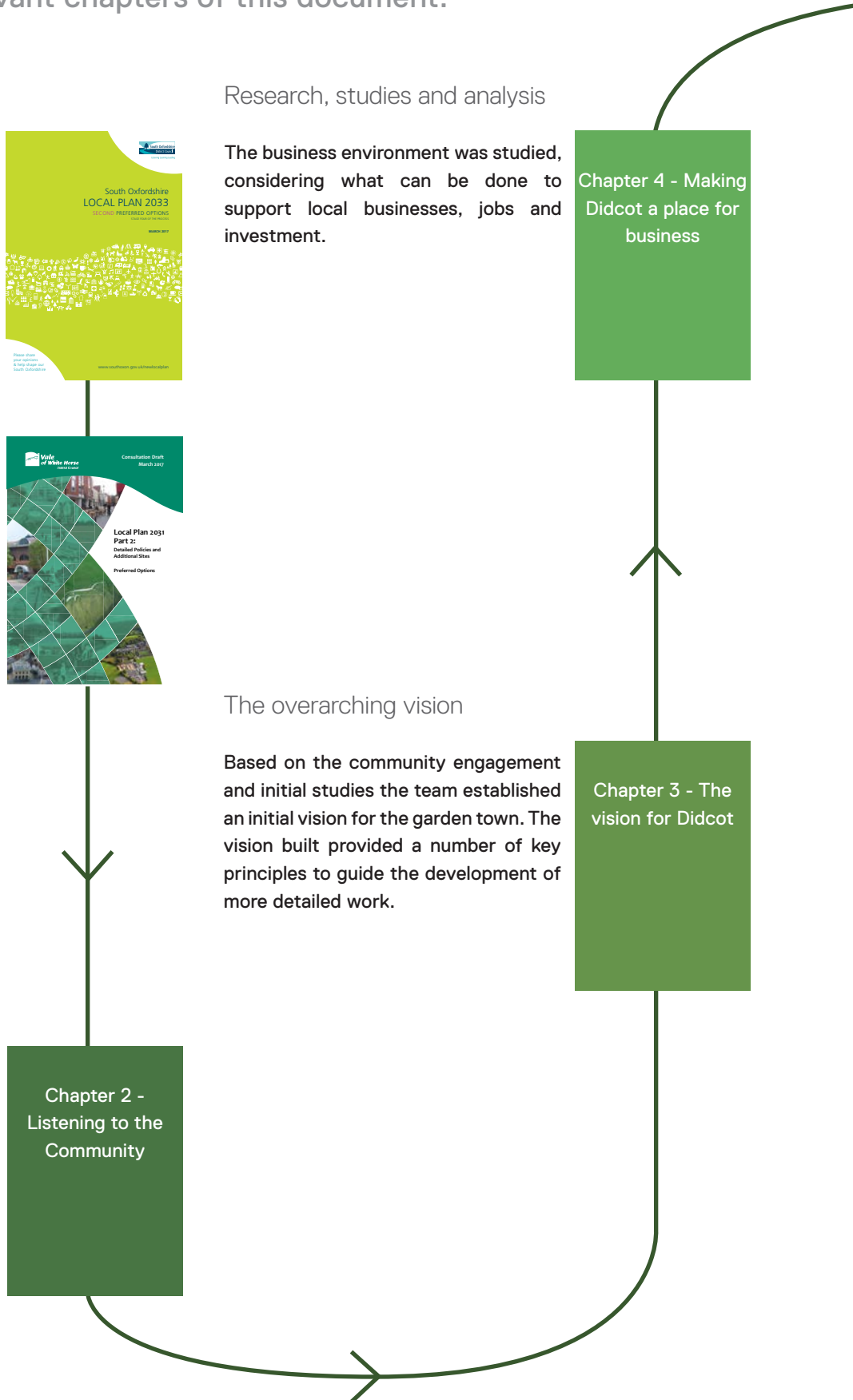
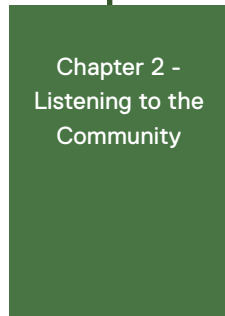
The overarching vision

Based on the community engagement and initial studies the team established an initial vision for the garden town. The vision built provided a number of key principles to guide the development of more detailed work.



Local feedback

The team met a broad range of community groups, businesses and local people. The engagement provided some clear messages as to what people like about Didcot and what they would like to see change to improve the town and to support economic growth.



Technical studies were conducted to give proposals a sound base. These included: transport, infrastructure and social infrastructure, within which more detailed studies were conducted.

Chapter 5 - The infrastructure needed to support the garden town

A study of the local housing market was undertaken, identifying gaps in provision and areas of concern from local people and businesses. Options were developed for a wider range of housing types and tenures and to support faster delivery of these.

Chapter 6 - Delivering a wider choice of homes

Given its place within the Science Vale, Didcot has the opportunity to be an exemplar in smart 21st century living. The team worked with sector experts and industry to ensure the masterplan benefits from cutting edge technologies being developed in the area.

Chapter 7 - A connected smart community

The green infrastructure in and surrounding Didcot was studied, after which a strategy was created to ensure the garden town lives up to its name.

Chapter 8 - A super green town

Delivery of the garden town

The key actions for progressing the garden town were analysed, together with funding sources, to identify how the proposals can be delivered.

Chapter 11 - Funding and implementing the proposals

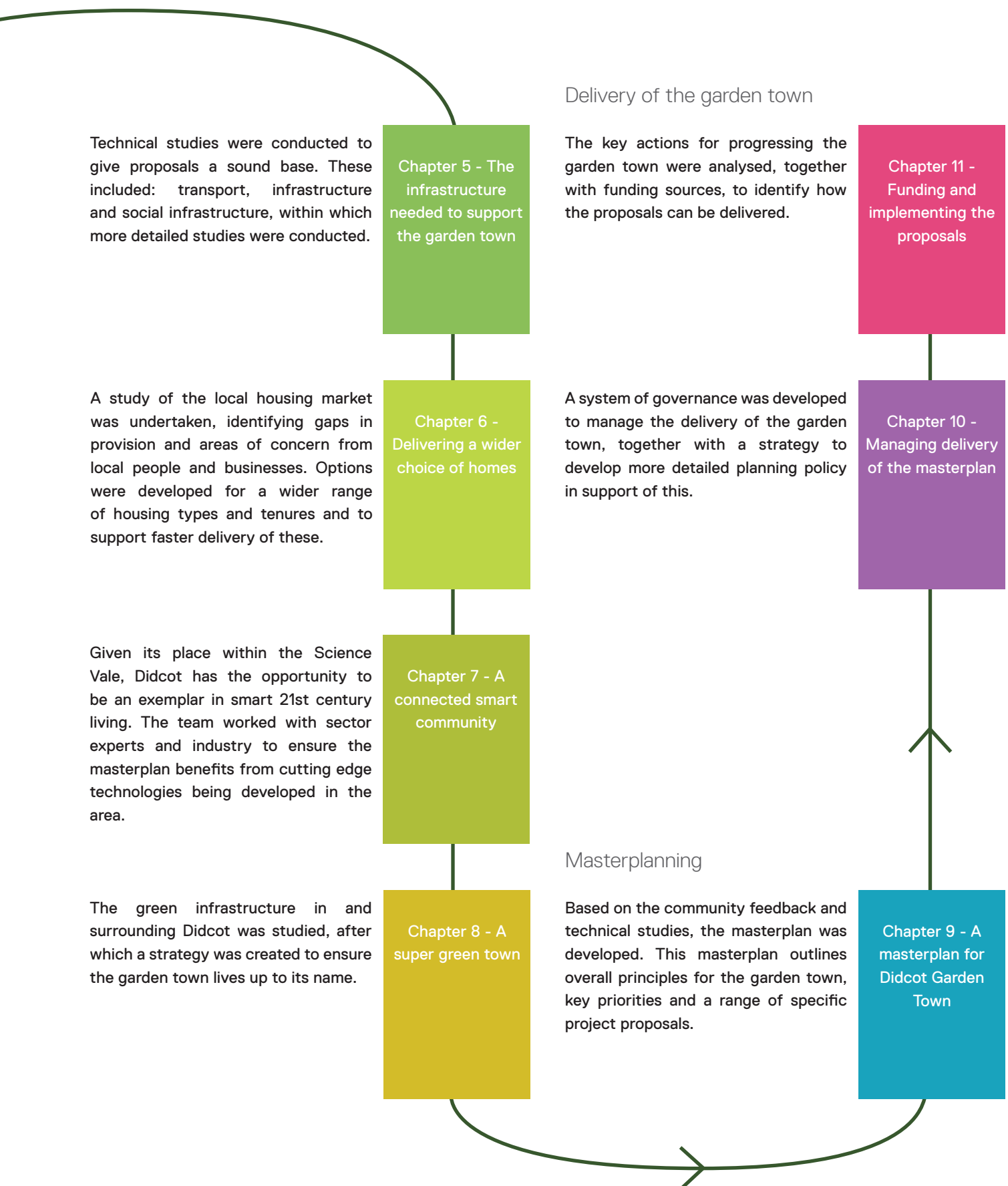
A system of governance was developed to manage the delivery of the garden town, together with a strategy to develop more detailed planning policy in support of this.

Chapter 10 - Managing delivery of the masterplan

Masterplanning

Based on the community feedback and technical studies, the masterplan was developed. This masterplan outlines overall principles for the garden town, key priorities and a range of specific project proposals.

Chapter 9 - A masterplan for Didcot Garden Town



1.1.3 A vision for Didcot Garden Town

Didcot Garden Town is going to be all about high quality public spaces and connections. Physical connections and accessible, high quality, open spaces are important: Didcot will have easy links to the science campuses and out into the beautiful surrounding countryside, and better ways for people to get around within the town itself. But just as important are social connections. Didcot will create spaces and opportunities to bring together the diverse range of people who live, work and visit Didcot – from workers at the science campuses to those training at the technical college, to young families and those growing old in Didcot. Didcot will be a place that gives people something in common, and it will be a town where they meet, talk and think – about Didcot and its future, about

science and nature, about everyday life.

Connectivity and interlinked green spaces, both within Didcot and into the surrounding countryside, are key to the garden town masterplan and it will be delivered through proposals such as:

- Reducing traffic travelling through the centre of Didcot by re-directing as much traffic as possible around the town's northern periphery by completing major infrastructure works such as the proposed "Science Bridge" and phase three of the northern perimeter road
- Upgrading and completing the "Garden Line" cycleway and walkway that links the town centre with Culham and Harwell campuses

- Connecting Didcot to the surrounding countryside through cycle routes and pathways
- Enhancing the streets that link Didcot Station with the town centre, including civic spaces for gathering such as a new public square opposite the station
- Upgrading routes such as Broadway and Station Road so that they are safer for cyclists today and are ready for the autonomous vehicles of the near future being developed by high tech businesses in the area
- Providing a wider mix of homes, from apartments that are attractive to young, footloose professionals near to the town centre to family



homes and retirement housing, with care and support if people need it

- Bringing a technology institute into the town, giving a local presence to the Science Vale and its enterprise zones
- Creating new, attractive commercial space for bars and restaurants and new office or co-working space for smaller businesses
- Encouraging multi-generational living – perhaps a trial project of students connecting with elderly residents

The councils and their county council partners will work with government to secure funding to deliver essential

new infrastructure. The councils will also take the lead in housing and commercial development at sites such as the station gateway and Rich’s Sidings. More widely, the garden town team is encouraging developers and landowners who share the garden town vision to come forward and work with us to deliver great new public spaces and vibrant, high quality developments within the town.

Although the garden town does not have the power to improve services that are delivered by other organisations, such as the National Health Service or the county council, we will work with these organisations to help them make the improvements needed to make Didcot a great place in which to live and work. We will likewise seek to involve

churches of all faiths in our efforts to implement the delivery plan, since they have an important role to play in improving the health and wellbeing of local residents.

The Didcot Garden Town team believe that the work to date provides a great base for developing new connections and green spaces for Didcot, but it is only a start, the next step is to secure the funding needed to implement the delivery plan. Thereafter, local authorities, government, local people and businesses will all need to work together to make it happen.



Rutherford Appleton Laboratories building at Harwell © Stephen Kill

1.1.4 Garden town areas

The garden town project does not involve changing administrative boundaries. However, two boundaries relating to the garden town project were proposed: one for the garden town masterplan boundary and one for a wider area of influence that may be affected by some of the proposals included in the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (e.g. those relating to green infrastructure or urban/rural coalescence). These boundaries were the subject of public engagement in November-December 2016, and have since been updated to reflect the comments received.

What is the garden town masterplan area?

The Didcot Garden Town masterplan area is the extent of Didcot that is covered by the garden town masterplan. This area has been considered in detail to identify both appropriate development opportunities and in order to plan investment and improvements in transport, landscape, green infrastructure, public realm and social services. The masterplan's primary focus is the garden town masterplan area, but proposals that relate to connectivity – such as transport and green infrastructure – in some cases extend beyond the garden town boundary in order to join Didcot up with surrounding networks.

The Didcot Garden Town masterplan area is intended to cover the current and future extent of Didcot: the area where you might reasonably describe yourself as being 'in Didcot' if you lived or worked there. Didcot has already transcended its historic boundary in some areas to incorporate new homes and employment uses, and its planned growth will extend Didcot's boundary

further into neighbouring parishes. For example, parts of Great Western Park and the planned development at Valley Park are within the parish of Harwell, and the majority of the proposals for North East Didcot are within the parish of Long Wittenham.

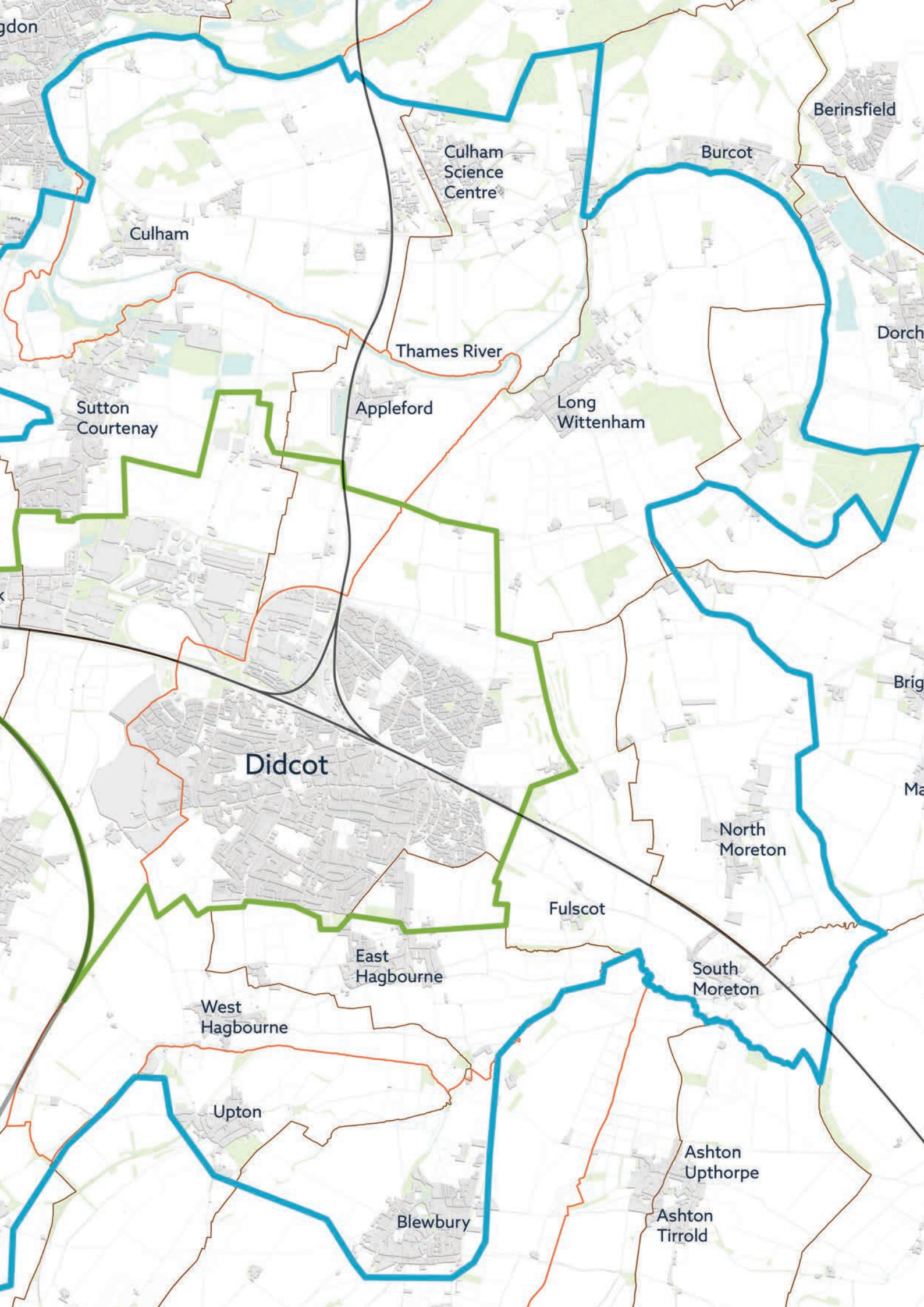
Garden town and science vale area of influence

As part of developing proposals for Didcot Garden Town, it has been important to look beyond Didcot's immediate boundary to consider sites and areas that are strongly linked to the garden town. This wider area around Didcot is called the 'area of influence'.

A number of factors have been taken into account when defining the area of influence. All housing sites identified in the garden town expression of interest as contributing towards the garden town housing target have been included within the Area of Influence. Given the strong ties between Didcot and the Science Vale, the area of influence includes the three major science campuses: Harwell, Milton Park* and Culham. As well-known and valued landscape features near to Didcot, Wittenham Clumps and the River Thames are important features contributing to Didcot's natural setting, these are included within the area of influence. Finally, Didcot acts as a primary service centre for a number of surrounding villages; this relationship influences Didcot's economy and transport network, and so these villages are included within the area of influence.

* Milton Park is referred to throughout this document. However it should be noted that the business park's formal name is Milton Park (MEPC Milton GP Ltd).





ndon

Berinsfield

Culham
Science
Centre

Burcot

Culham

Dorch

Thames River

Sutton
Courtenay

Appleford

Long
Wittenham

Brig

Ma

Didcot

North
Moreton

Fulscot

East
Hagbourne

South
Moreton

West
Hagbourne

Upton

Blewbury

Ashton
Upthorpe

Ashton
Tirrold

1.1.5 Didcot Garden Town masterplan

The Didcot Garden Town masterplan brings together the landscape, infrastructure, housing and economic principles of the garden town into a plan for the next 20 years.

It draws on the views of the community, businesses and other stakeholders to create a blueprint for Didcot's growth that delivers benefits for local people. It centres on mobility, connectivity and inclusion as its guiding principles, attempting to knit the town together.

Boundary

- Didcot Garden Town masterplan boundary

Land Use

- Didcot Station
- Community centres and retail
- Residential areas (existing)
- Residential areas (consented)
- Residential areas (proposed)
- Employment (existing)
- Employment (proposed)
- Science Vale enterprise zone and Didcot Growth Accelerator sites
- Education
- Healthcare
- Recreation & leisure
- Science Vale sites
- Major car parks

Landscape

- Park, formal garden, play, amenity and cemetery
- Publicly accessible natural green space
- Allotments, community garden, and city farm
- Proposed green buffer around necklace of villages
- Orchard
- Water / wetland
- Woodland
- Green corridor
- Garden Line





1.1.6 Overview of the delivery plan

The delivery plan sets out a vision for Didcot Garden Town, a series of specific recommendations under different themes, a masterplan and an approach to delivering the proposals. Taken together, the proposals within the Plan provide the opportunity to:

- Diversify housing types and delivery methods, providing new choices such as professionally managed private rented homes and a locally based factory-built home constructor
- Accelerate the delivery of homes and the social and physical infrastructure required to support new residential development
- Support economic growth generated by UK's leading cluster for commercialisation of science, building on the strengths of Harwell Campus, Culham Science Centre and Milton Park to deliver an additional £1bn of annual gross value added to the UK economy
- Explore ways to capture value from new development, which can be channelled into the infrastructure, affordable housing and green spaces to ensure these developments benefit the wider community
- Establish strong local governance for the garden town. Representatives of the local community, local businesses and district, county and town councils to create a unified, democratically accountable delivery body

This section provides a brief overview of the content of each delivery plan chapter.

Chapter 2 - Listening to the community

The delivery plan is founded on feedback from local people. Over the last 6 months the team has met more than 100 groups and businesses, held 5 major public events, provided briefings to 9 parish Councils and received over 400 comments via the online portal, which has recorded more than 4,600 interactions with the public since it was established. Stakeholders ranged from large multi-national businesses to small local community groups. A wide range of views were expressed but several strong themes were clear:

- The green space within and around Didcot is highly valued
- Development is welcomed but only when there is a plan to deliver supporting infrastructure
- Affordability of housing is a problem for local residents as well as affecting recruitment for growing businesses
- Improvements in and around the station and town centre would be welcomed and create a more vibrant town
- Strong resistance to development on Ladygrove Park, strong support from cyclist groups, and a clear desire to know more about how public services infrastructure will be delivered

The delivery plan has been shaped by the feedback to date and identifies the way in which further public engagement will take place over the next year. The governance arrangements within the plan also ensure representation from community and business stakeholders in ongoing decision making.

Going forward it is particularly important that there are convenient ways for people to engage with the Garden Town and for some momentum to be generated in making early priorities happen. To do this, a centrally located site will become a temporary Didcot Garden Town office, potentially in conjunction with the connectivity hub proposed in Chapter 3. This will take the form of some flexible space – maybe constructed from innovatively re-purposed materials – that can serve a number of different purposes and host a mix of events. The Didcot Garden Town team think it should:

- Host a master copy of the Didcot Garden Town masterplan and act as the location for consultation and public engagement
- Provide hot desking workspace
- Host pop-up cafés/ bars/ restaurants that use fresh produce from new community garden in the town or offer training opportunities for local students in the catering sector
- Stage events from technology and science partners that are keen to show what new ideas are emerging. Also artistic events highlight the creativity within the town

Chapter 3 - The vision for Didcot

Section 1.1.3 of this chapter provides a brief overview of the vision for Didcot Garden Town. The text below explains the elements of the vision and how these have come together.

At an early stage of preparing the delivery plan the team worked with the district councils to establish high level principles for the garden town. These are included in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2 Preferred Options and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan Second Preferred Options, which are summarised in figure 1.1. These principles guided more detailed work which arrived at the vision for Didcot to be “Oxfordshire’s home for future science, applied technology, nature and vibrant communities”.

Underpinning the vision are three brand identity pillars and three vision principles:

Brand identity pillars

- Visionary science and advanced technologies
- Fantastic green space
- Connected, cultural communities

Vision principles

- Unified identity
- Inspiring green living
- Creative collaboration

Individual parts of the delivery plan then add further priorities appropriate to individual topics such as landscape, spatial planning or specific key sites. The vision and further priorities are all aligned to and build upon the masterplan principles established at the outset and set out within the emerging local plans.

Summary of Didcot Garden Town masterplan principles within the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils’ emerging Local Plans

- Design – encouraging pioneering architecture and prioritising green spaces
- Local character – a unique identity for Didcot, distinctive from the surrounding villages and protecting their rural character
- Density and tenure – a variety of densities, housing types and tenures, including higher density development near transport hubs
- Transport and movement – reducing reliance on motorised vehicles and promoting a step-change towards active and public transport
- Landscape and green infrastructure – ensuring new development enhances the natural environment and promoting habitat planting and food growing zones
- Social and Community Benefits – creating accessible and vibrant neighbourhoods, a strong town centre and promoting community ownership and stewardship

Figure 1.1 - The Didcot Garden Town masterplan principles incorporated in the councils’ local plans

Chapter 4 - Making Didcot a place for business

Didcot has a strong economic base built on the history of the area as a rail interchange, power generation and nuclear energy research centre. The area continues to be successful with two enterprise zones and a whole range of local and international businesses, particularly associated with high tech science. The delivery plan focuses on two key economic themes that support existing plans for creating 20,000 new jobs in the area:

- Increasing the density and quality of jobs within the town centre. Initiatives include new council-led commercial and retail development, community employment plans and purpose-built space to suit the

needs of modern Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

- Supporting Science Vale UK and enterprise zones specifically business which commercialise technological innovation.
- Proposals respond to the feedback from businesses and include development of higher density housing on flexible terms with on-site amenities, infrastructure upgrades to facilitate cycle and future driverless pod access to Culham Science Centre / Harwell Campus and flexibility to speed up the process for testing of new technologies within the town

Chapter 5 - The infrastructure needed to support growth

A planned and funded approach to infrastructure is critical to securing the benefits of growth for Didcot. The delivery plan sets out proposals covering:

Movement

Identifying ways to promote a shift towards sustainable transport such as cycling and the infrastructure required to make key routes safe. Setting out a prioritised schedule of road upgrades including the flexibilities required for future transport methods such as driverless pods. Future proofing the masterplan such that movement of the railway station east is possible, should this deliver sufficient benefits.

Utilities

Establishing the likely upgrades required to support the planned growth and the utility companies' level of preparation for this. Incorporating an approach to infrastructure planning within the garden town governance structure, to offer utility companies better visibility of changing development programmes.

Sustainability

Identifying the benefits of sustainable infrastructure including heat networks, sustainable urban drainage, water saving technology and green roofs.

Social infrastructure

Assessing the needs for education, health, cultural and leisure facilities considering changing demographics. Identifying gaps between secured and required infrastructure and proposing support for a new health campus to provide better services more cost effectively. Assessing the current leisure offer and suggesting enhancements including a wider night time economy and more hotel and conference space.

Chapter 6 - Delivering a wider choice of homes

Housing was a significant source of feedback, both from businesses and the community. There is a need for more housing and for this to be more affordable and accessible to local people and employees. There is also a desire for a much wider variety of types and tenures of homes, including more options for younger people, key workers, older people and those with specialist needs. People also wanted to see homes which are more modern, distinctive, sustainable and interesting.

The delivery plan identifies how the needs of the garden town differ from the wider districts and suggests a range of housing tenures to meet these needs. Examples of new options include:

- Build to rent – homes which are purpose built for private rent, managed professionally with on-site maintenance and amenities such as a gym, dining room, roof terrace and parcel/ grocery delivery storage
- Intermediate and living rent – generally let at between 50 and 80 per cent of market rent and prioritised for groups such as key workers and those in nearby employment hubs such as a science centre
- Older living – a range of housing options for older people including those who wish to downsize but live independently and those who need care at a range of levels

Proposals are also made for a route to support developers through the planning system where they promote schemes meeting the garden town housing aspirations.

Chapter 7 - A Connected Smart Community

Didcot Garden Town will deliver projects which use technology to make Didcot a better place to live and work. To reduce the barriers to successful implementation of such projects, the garden town team have engaged industry experts from the start of the delivery plan process. Products and solutions that have been identified as having the potential to deliver benefits include:

- E-Bikes
- Public WiFi
- 5th generation mobile networks
- Driverless vehicles
- Connected ticketing services
- Environmental sensors
- Smart home technology
- Energy networks
- District heating

The next stage of work will be to develop strategies to guide the implementation of projects that achieve the vision objectives.

Sustainability is also a focus of the garden town, specific projects being considered include:

- Sustainable fuels for council fleet vehicles to reduce carbon emissions
- Small scale renewable energy solutions
- Rainwater and greywater harvesting
- Water saving devices
- Sustainable drainage schemes
- Reuse / repair shop

Chapter 8 - A super green town

A green landscape with generous parks, gardens and tree-lined streets is a defining characteristic of a garden town. Didcot benefits from a range of open spaces within the town, its access to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and nearby, natural attractions such as Wittenham Clumps. The delivery plan identifies approaches to protect and enhance what already exists and opportunities to create new green infrastructure. The key priorities are:

- Connecting the town with green routes to promote cycling and walking, particularly for strategic connections between the science campuses and to destinations such as the River Thames and Wittenham Clumps
- Creating new multi-functional spaces, promoting physical activity and ensuring everyone in the town has a green space within 300 metres of their home
- Promoting local growing of food and building on this opportunities to use produce in community cafés or markets
- Integrating new urban public space, with a key focus on the station arrival and Broadway
- Protecting key views, ensuring important viewpoints towards features such as Wittenham Clumps remain and identifying the potential to create a new landscape feature in the longer term
- Ensuring coherent planting structures to new developments
- Formalising green gaps between villages, preserving the character of the distinct areas and preventing coalescence
- Integrating blue infrastructure to support biodiversity and reduce flood risk, this could include improvement of Moor Ditch, new Sustainable Urban Drainage schemes (SUDs) near the station and A4130
- Upgrading the quality of existing green space and encouraging greater use of the spaces
- Additional planting in existing residential areas, for example adding street trees, supporting green roofs or providing advice to help re-green front gardens
- Offering guidance to developers via a design review panel



A school visit to the engine shed at Didcot Railway Centre © Frank Dumbleton



A permeable, connected movement network that supports and future proofs all modes of transport



Didcot will use Smart principles to introduce new technology



Designed to facilitate, encourage and support communities through design



A network of open spaces form the backbone of the garden town



An extended and enhanced town centre in the heart of Didcot Garden Town



Range of uses and designs of housing with appropriate density



Sustainability embedded in every aspect of decision making

Figure 1.2 - Seven masterplan priorities

Chapter 9 - A masterplan for Didcot Garden Town

The masterplan is informed by and based on the masterplan principles within the local plans, community engagement and studies in chapters 4-7. The plan sets a strategy for Didcot's growth over the next 20 years and beyond based on a number of key masterplan priorities shown in figure 1.2. The masterplan identifies proposals within a series of areas:

The Cultural Spine

This route comprises of Didcot Road, Wantage Road and Broadway and has the opportunity to become the public heart of the town. The improvements to the area will include:

- Wider, better quality pavements which allow temporary retail uses such as pop-ups or markets
- Dedicated space for cyclists, segregated from cars where possible
- New public spaces surrounded by shops, cafés and night life establishments. This could include a new square to terminate the route at Rich's Sidings and a public space fronted by the Baptist House

The Gateway Spine

The Gateway Spine runs from Milton Interchange to Jubilee roundabout. This route will change to better accommodate cycling and new methods of transport, including an arrival space at the station. Connectivity would be improved by the delivery of the Science Bridge and completion of the northern perimeter road.

The Garden Line

Linking Culham Science Centre with Didcot station and Harwell Campus, the Garden Line will be a safe cycle and pedestrian route. The line will be adaptable, accommodating other modes of transport such as driverless pods as these become available.

The town centre

Didcot's existing town centre is crucial to the future social, economic and physical development. This area will receive public spaces improvements and improved signage. Opportunity sites including Rich's Sidings and the Baptist House have the potential to accommodate larger projects that will provide retail and commercial space, making Didcot more of a destination.

Opportunity sites

The masterplan also establishes aspirations for a number of specific opportunity sites, the near term and medium term opportunities are summarised below:

- Didcot Station – An upgraded or extended station, including an arrival space and shared surface extending across Station Road
- Didcot Gateway South - A new commercial hub, high quality homes, and café and retail
- Rich's Sidings – A mixed commercial space, flexible accommodation for small and medium enterprises and purpose built private rented homes
- Ladygrove East – A gateway site to the east of Didcot providing additional homes and a local centre

- North West Valley Park – The potential for a new specialist neighbourhood comprising 800 homes and associated green space
- Baptist House – An important site at the junction of Broadway and Station Road with the opportunity to develop a new town square for Didcot
- Didcot Railway Centre – The opportunity to enhance and expand the railway centre and bring its work to life in the station square area
- Land east of Rich's Sidings – A site east of the town centre which could accommodate employment or housing uses
- Land south of A4130 (near Great Western Park) – A site which could offer a key opportunity near the A4130

A design review panel should be established to offer feedback to developers from an impartial and independent expert group. This approach has worked successfully in other towns and would help promote new development in accordance with the garden town vision.

Chapter 10 - Managing delivery of the masterplan

For the garden town to be delivered with certainty there is a need for a strong system of governance and development management.

The delivery plan identifies a bespoke governance system which ensures:

- A coherent and focused approach, avoiding the potential problems of cross-boundary coordination between the two district councils
- A body which has the appropriate powers to realise the garden town vision, these include plan making, development management and funding
- Representation of stakeholders from the community and business as well as the district councils' leaders, town councils and parishes

The delivery plan also proposes that a future joint Development Plan Document (DPD) be prepared and, after examination, adopted. A DPD will ensure the vision for the garden town is clear and give the strongest level of planning policy in support of this vision.

Chapter 11 - Funding and implementing the proposals

The delivery plan includes a wide range of proposals, ranging from low cost early priorities, through major long term infrastructure projects, to development activities which can create a commercial return. Chapter 12 of the delivery plan details pre-implementation costs which are items such as technical studies, surveys or design which must happen before a project can

be firmed up. These are followed by implementation costs which represent the costs of delivering proposals such as an infrastructure project, building or community initiative. Finally any currently secured funding is identified together with anticipated receipts from any commercial activities.

In summary the delivery plan identifies that c.£10.8m is required to fund pre-implementation costs and to support a dedicated garden town team for the next 5 years. Implementation of the projects will then cost c.£612.1m, set against secured/ anticipated receipts of c.£288.0m. The councils are engaging with central government to identify opportunities for the initial pre-implementation and garden town team costs to be funded, together with contributions to the longer term implementation costs.

Whilst the costs of the garden town over the coming decades are substantial, these must be weighed against the benefits, both to local people and the UK economy as a whole. There is the opportunity to upgrade local infrastructure, create and protect green spaces and build on the strengths of the town to create "Oxfordshire's home for future science, applied technology, nature and vibrant communities". There is also the unique opportunity to accelerate and deliver over 15,000 new homes, 20,000 jobs and add substantial value to the UK economy via the cutting edge work in the Science Vale.

Status of the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan

It should be noted that statements in this document do not amount to formal decisions of the bodies involved unless they have specifically agreed to them and that the implementation of the delivery plan is, where necessary, subject to formal decisions of the bodies involved.

There may also be elements of the document that are beneficial when considered within the context of Didcot Garden Town only that could have wider implications for the districts and the county, as a whole, that have not yet been fully understood or evaluated. This evaluation will be undertaken when key projects move into a more detailed planning and pre-implementation stage of development.

1.1.7 The delivery plan and other council policy

The Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan is intended to set out a vision for the town and a framework to deliver this vision. The plan builds on existing and emerging policies including the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils' Local Plans and strategies relating to issues such as housing and the economy. The plan is complimentary to these policies and strategies, suggesting more detailed and specific plans for Didcot Garden Town within the context of the wider districts.

It is recommended that in time the delivery plan forms the basis of a joint Development Plan Document (DPD) such as an area action plan. Following an examination process this DPD would be adopted by the district councils, offering clarity and certainty on the

proposals and giving the strongest level of planning policy in support of the garden town vision.

In its present form the delivery plan does not represent adopted planning policy, it will also take some time before a DPD is considered for examination and adoption. If early progress in realising the aims of the garden town is to be made, it is therefore important to consider how the delivery plan can influence planning decisions whilst a DPD is considered.

It is intended that the delivery plan be the subject of formal public consultation during summer 2017, allowing an updated document to be considered for approval by councillors in Autumn 2017. Subject to approval, it is suggested the delivery plan be published and treated

as a non-statutory planning document. Whilst the document would not have any formal status in development plan policy terms, it would represent a clear statement of intent and commitment to the garden town vision. Given the national importance of garden towns, the document could also be a material consideration and carry weight in determination of planning applications. As such, the garden town vision could begin to have influence as early as late 2017.



Stargazing live at Rutherford Appleton Laboratories © Stephen Kill

1.1.8 Project timeline

This timeline sets out how the Didcot Garden Town project has progressed so far and the future milestones as the project continues.

