



Didcot Garden Town

DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN
ANNUAL REPORT
2020

PUBLISHED MAY 2021



OUR COMMITMENT

In December 2015, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) granted Didcot “garden town” status based on a bid to build 15,000 homes and deliver 20,000 jobs by 2031. It was one of the first existing towns to achieve this award.

Didcot is a vibrant town with a good sense of community. New neighbourhoods to the north, east and west of Didcot are currently being built, each fully integrating with the town's local communities and nearby employment sites. The 20,000 new jobs are being delivered through the big strategic sites of Milton Park, Culham and Harwell.

An additional 92 hectares is being made available for employment growth to compliment these business sites. The connection between the “Science Vale” and Didcot Garden Town is strong.



GOVERNANCE

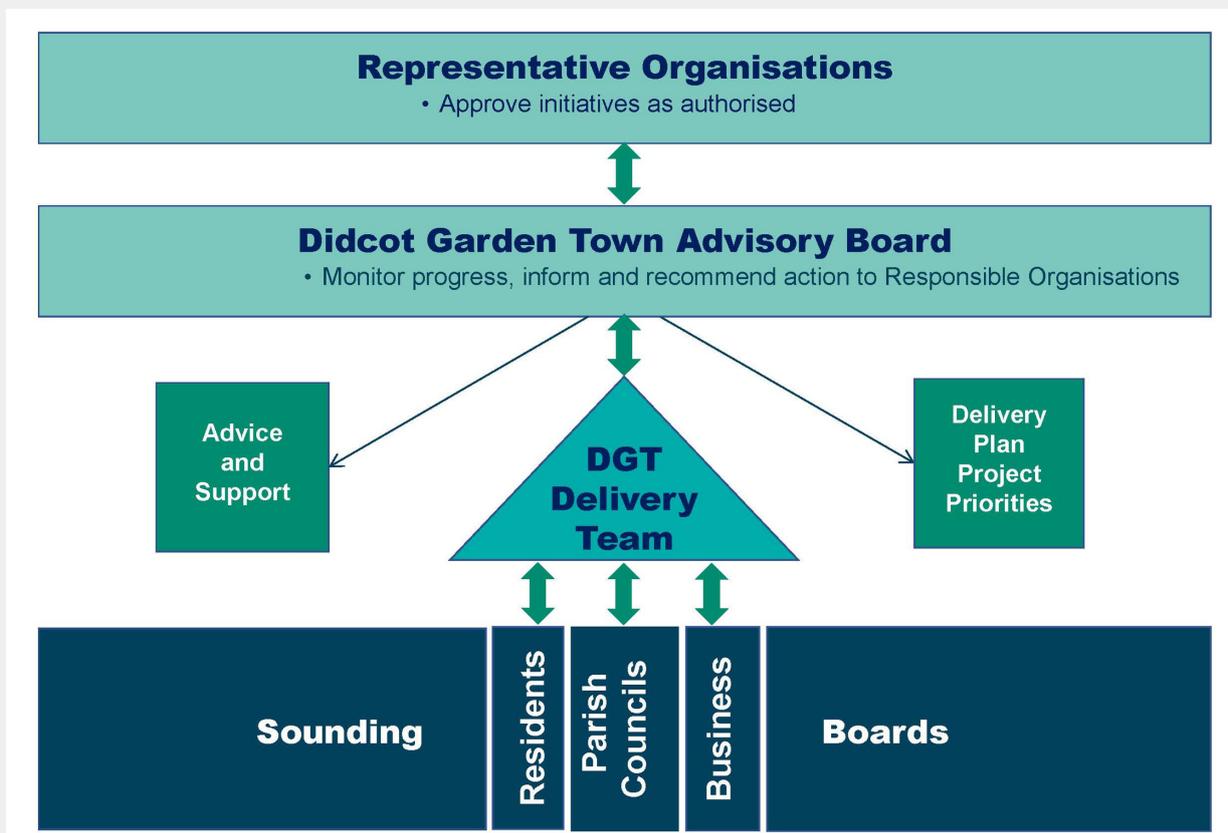
During 2020, the Didcot Garden Town (DGT) Advisory Board was opened to the public to participate. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the accessibility to watch the meeting was efficiently rolled out virtually.

The boards represent local insight and knowledge to support delivering projects to meet local need. They also encourage stewardship within the garden town, and we look forward to the subsequent workstreams with all stakeholders moving forward.

After approvals by both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, a new seat to represent the five parish councils within the DGT boundary was made available on the board. Cllr Rita Atkinson from Sutton Courtenay Parish Council was appointed.

We've successfully launched all three sounding boards comprising of residents, parish councils and businesses. There was great participation in all three sounding boards with 80 residents and 34 business attending the relevant launches.

Subsequently, the sounding boards have inspired other voluntary task and finish groups to develop and deliver garden town priorities with support from the DGT team, such as the Business Leadership group.

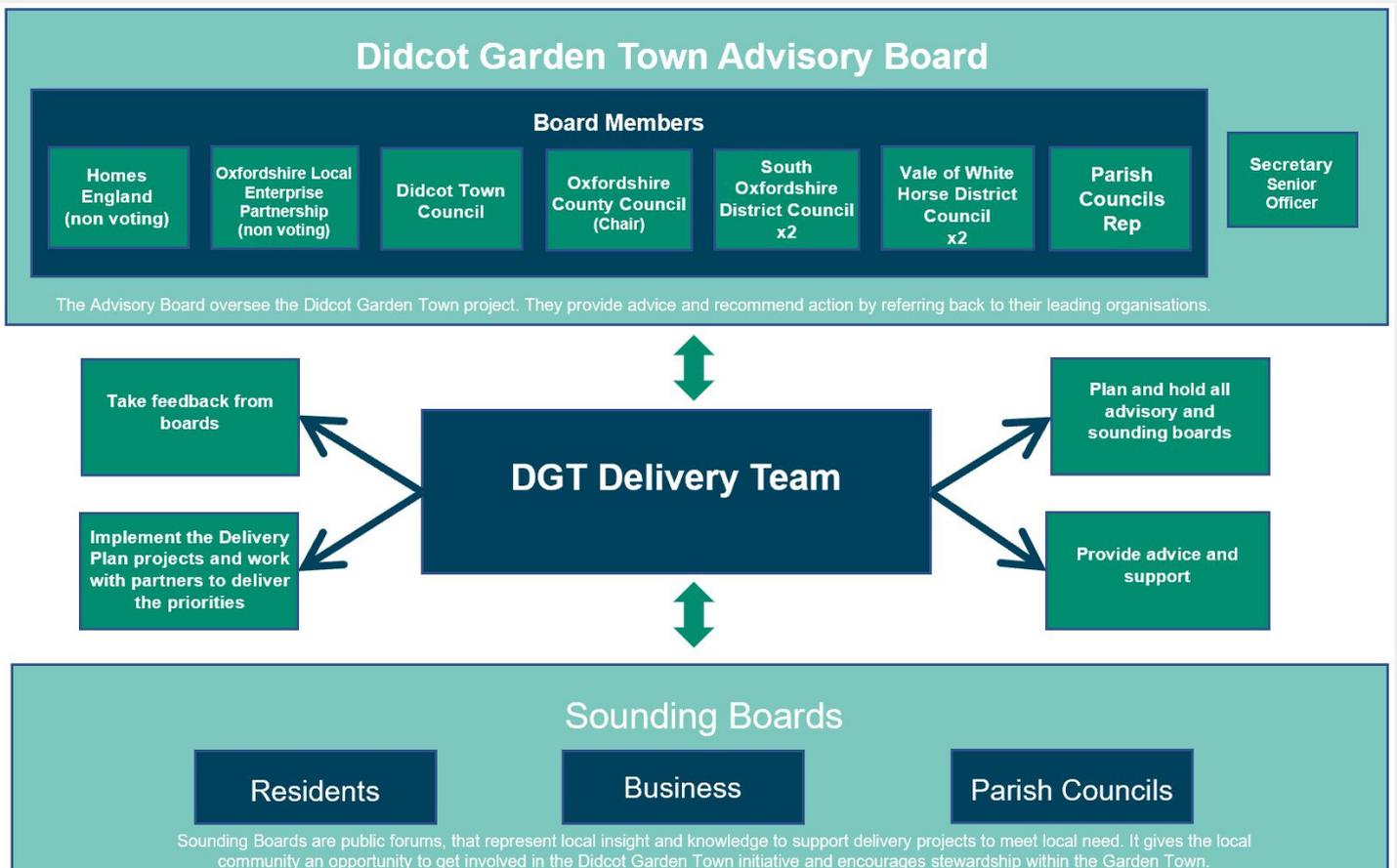


DGT ADVISORY BOARD

While the advisory board cannot make formal decisions on initiatives for Didcot, the meetings are an important part of the garden town project.

Each member of the advisory board represents a different local authority or agency – all of which have an interest to ensure the vision for Didcot Garden Town project is carried out in a sustainable and holistic way.

The board do this by reviewing feedback from all three sounding boards, and they receive updates on plans and initiatives from various project managers at each meeting. Together, board members discuss and make the necessary recommendations for their own organisation to discuss and formally approve.





Councillor Ian Hudspeth

Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, Chair of DGTAB

"I attend the Advisory Board to ensure that the county council can help deliver infrastructure that is required for good sustainable growth, particularly quality homes."

Ian was elected as a County Councillor in 2005, retaining his seat in 2009. In 2007, he became Cabinet Member for Transport. From 2009 to 2011 his portfolio was Growth & Infrastructure covering strategic planning including transport, housing waste and the green & clean agenda. He was elected Leader of the County Council in May 2012.



Councillor Sue Cooper

Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council

"I attend the Advisory Board because I am keen to hear the opinions and ideas of the people who live and work in Didcot and its surrounding areas, so we can improve life here."

Sue was first elected to South Oxfordshire District Council in 1991, then in 1995, she became involved with planning for the Orchard Centre, and later with the redesign of the front of the station and the cycle route. She has retained a strong interest in Didcot ever since.



Councillor Emily Smith

Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council

"I attend the Advisory Board because I represent residents across the Vale district. It means I can understand Didcot's specific needs and help ensure the Garden Town becomes a healthy and inclusive community."

Emily grew up in Abingdon and is married with two children who are at primary school. Emily is interested in supporting young people through the education system and into fulfilling careers. She has a professional background in Children's Services – in both the public and voluntary sector.



Councillor Mocky Khan

Leader of Didcot Town Council

"I attend the Advisory Board because I represent Didcot as a councillor and live in the town. It helps me understand and influence decisions made that will have an impact on our community, business and residents. It is about time Didcot had a voice."

Mocky moved 6 years ago to Didcot due to the great transport links. As Mocky settled in the town, he saw residents needing help, areas for improvement and he wanted to support. He stood for Didcot Town Council and got elected in 2017. Since then he has been re-elected and is currently the Leader of Didcot Town Council and the Deputy Mayor.



Councillor David Rouane

Cabinet Member of South Oxfordshire District Council

"I attend the Advisory Board because I am the cabinet member for Didcot Garden Town. This means I can ensure that what we are doing at South Oxfordshire District Council, alongside other partners contributes towards achieving the Garden Town vision."

David has lived in Didcot for over 30 years and has worked as a director of several national charities, most recently for a climate change campaign. He has been a town councillor for many years and is now South's cabinet member for Housing & Environment and Didcot Garden Town. In his spare time he set up Didcot Film Club which 'shows the films that Cineworld doesn't' on the big screen at Cornerstone.



Councillor Judy Roberts

Cabinet Member for Vale of White Horse District Council

"I attend the Advisory Board because I'm responsible for the Vale implementation of the DGT masterplan. I attend these meetings so I can hear the ideas put forward and the response to our plans from all sectors of the Didcot community."

Judy has worked for 20 years in the NHS as a Biochemist. Judy has been a Vale of White Horse District Councillor for 14 years as well as a Cumnor Parish Councillor and a County Councillor for 4 years. Judy has been involved in playground installations and community centres, planning committees and transport projects. She is also the Vale portfolio holder for the Didcot Garden Town.



Councillor Rita Atkinson

DGT Parish Councils Representative

"I attend the Advisory Board because residents of the surrounding villages are important stakeholders in the development of the vision. This is an opportunity to include the perspective of Didcot's rural neighbours to enhance the benefits of a Garden Town for all."

Rita has been a member of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council since 2003. In July 2020, she was made Parish Council Representative for the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board. Prior to retirement, Rita worked at the Harwell Campus as a scientist. She is a Trustee of the Abingdon DAMASCUS Youth Project and a Trustee and Governor of the Ridgeway Education Trust. Rita was awarded an MBE in 2004 for her voluntary work.



Nigel Tipple

Chief Executive of Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnerships

"I attend the Advisory Board because personally and organisationally, I want to see the communities and businesses of the area supported. In doing so maximising their individual potential to engage in and benefit from this significant place focused regeneration programme which will be promoted."

Nigel joined OxLEP in June 2013 and has made his mark with energetic and inspiration leadership. Nigel has over 20 years experience in the formation, development, operation and management of organisations throughout the public and private sectors.



Catherine Turner

Head of High Growth and New Settlements

"I attend the Advisory Board because I care about good design. I enjoy working with partners who have ambitious proposals like here in Didcot, which are rooted in sustainability proposals and exemplify high quality design and placemaking."

Catherine is the Head of the High Growth and New Settlements team which is in the Market Places and Partners directorate at Homes England. She previously was the Head of the South West Land team.

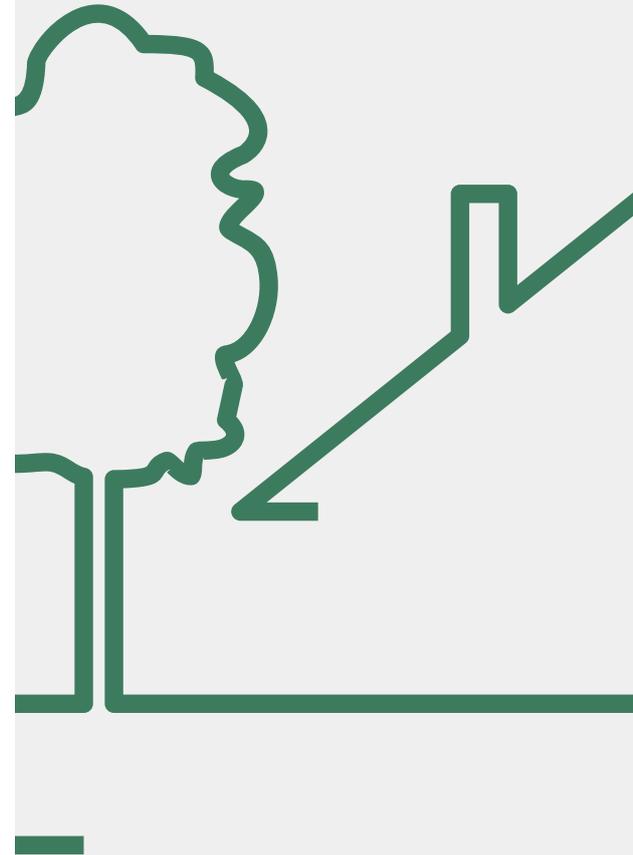
HOUSING

Great progress has been made with over 10,000 homes either approved or under construction with the facilities to support the needs of a growing community.

There are a variety of projects the team are currently representing DGT's principles and priorities on or have completed in 2020.

They include:

- Didcot A (former power station)
- Gateway
- Ladygrove East
- North East Didcot reserved matters
- Valley Park
- Objection to Sandringham Way project that was proposed on the green buffer
- Communication on West Valley Park site ("Milton Fields") is ongoing



ECONOMIC GROWTH

Looking ahead, 17,000 new jobs alone are secured through the growing opportunities at Milton Park, Harwell Campus and Culham Science Park.

Since 2015, investment by businesses into the garden town has been substantial. An estimated figure in excess of £2bn has been invested in to the area with the figure continuing to grow. Recently, we've seen the UK's Vaccines Manufacturing & Innovation Centre being located at Harwell Campus to support the recovery of COVID-19.

Furthermore, the DGT team have taken a lead in partnership with MEPC to refresh the Local Development Order at Milton Park to help bring more sustainable development to the park.



FUNDING AND RESOURCES

Our bid for 2019-20 capacity funding from Homes England was successfully announced in January 2020, where Didcot was awarded £100,000 in revenue funding.

We are awaiting the announcement of the proposed allocations for the annual capacity funding for 2020-21 which the team submitted a bid for in August 2020.

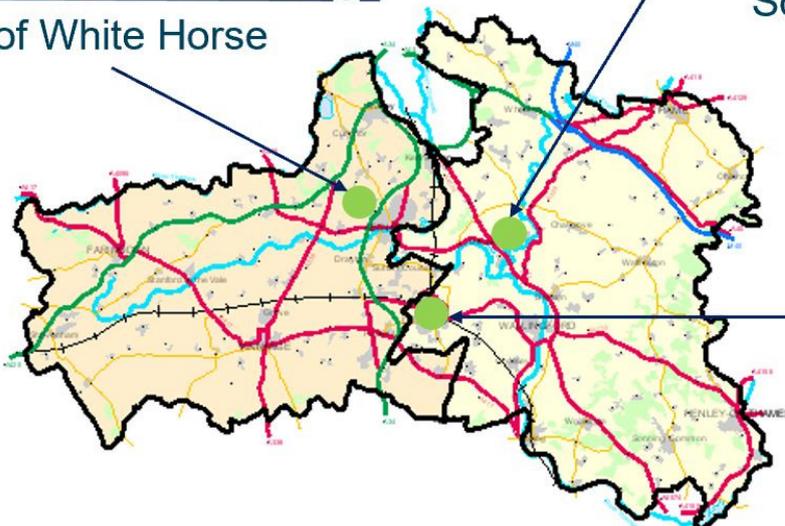
The team expanded into a Garden Communities service within South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils, managing Berinsfield Garden Village and Dalton Barracks Garden Village additionally. This encourages greater oversight of the garden communities' projects and synergies between the areas.



Dalton Barracks Garden Village
Vale of White Horse

Berinsfield Garden Village
Regenerating Community Health and Wellbeing

South Oxfordshire



Didcot Garden Town

South Oxfordshire and
Vale of White Horse

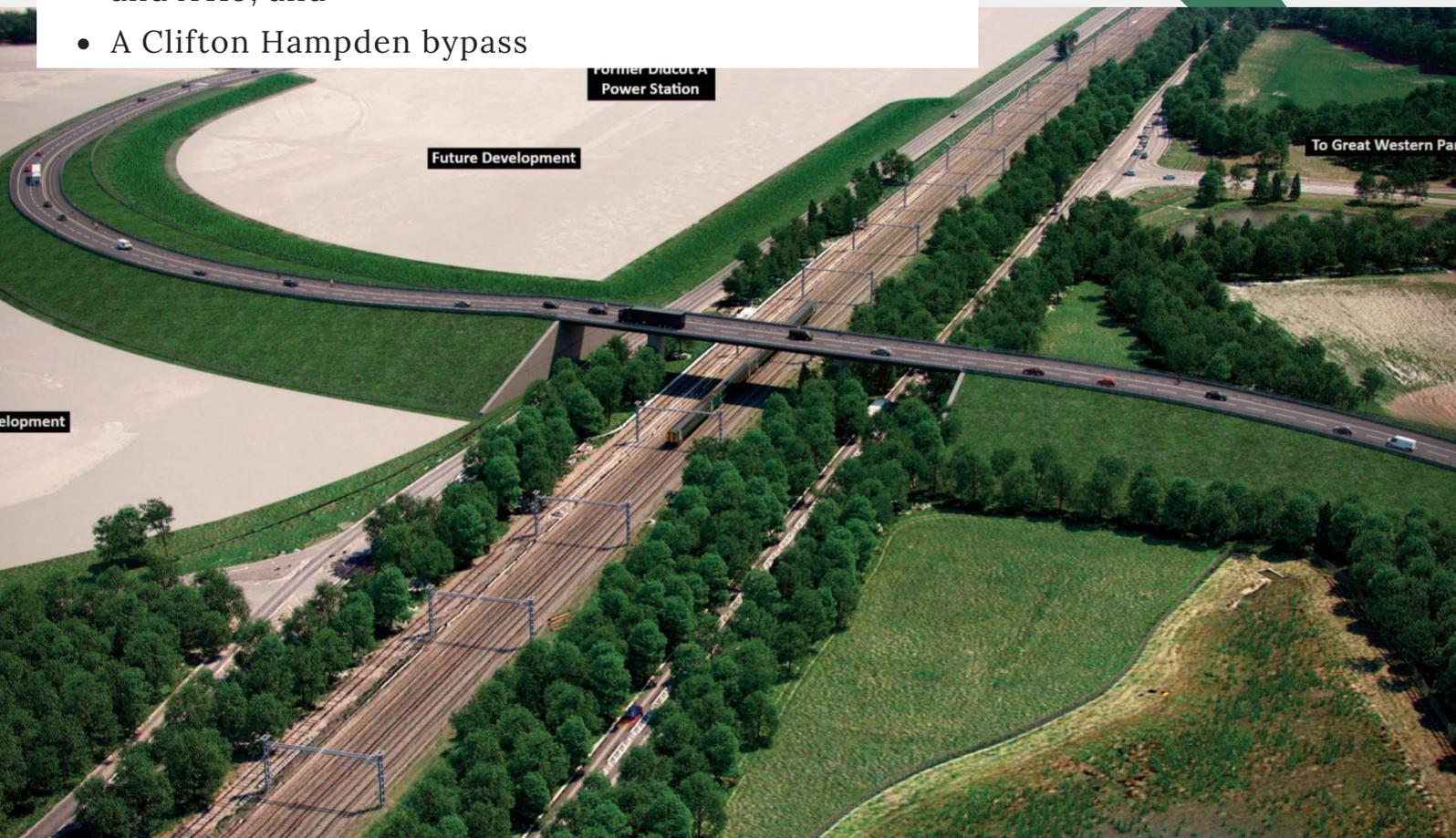
HIF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

In March 2019, Didcot Garden Town was awarded £218 million in Housing Infrastructure Funding to support the councils to improve travel for residents, communities and business whilst supporting thousands of new homes and jobs. The funding agreement was signed in June 2020.

All schemes include segregated walking and cycling routes and will facilitate new bus services which will give people real sustainable travel choice.

This sum of £218m (towards infrastructure costs of £234m) will deliver:

- Widening the A4130 from A34 Milton Interchange towards Didcot from single to dual carriageway;
- A new bridge over the A4130, Great Western Railway Line and Milton Road into the former Didcot A Power Station site;
- A new Didcot to Culham bridge between the A4130 and A415; and
- A Clifton Hampden bypass





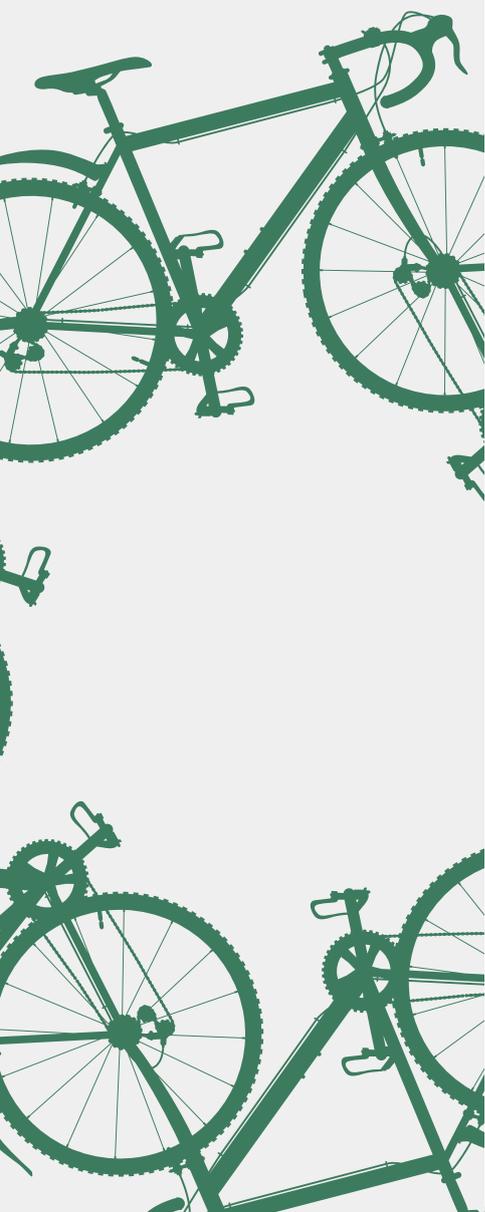
The April 2020 public consultation generally confirmed support of the HIF1 design proposals. The consultation received double the amount of responses compared to the 2018 consultation. Suggestions were worked through relating to each scheme change.

Stakeholder management and engagement plans have been developed to support the ongoing work relating to the HIF1 projects, which include the statutory engagements with national organisations regarding planning. Developer discussions and land negotiations are ongoing. Preferred alignments of the schemes were agreed by Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet in July 2020.

Environmental surveys were completed, with ground investigations and archaeological trenching still being progressed.

Pedestrian and cycle connections will be improved relating to existing public rights of way. This includes access to the centre of Didcot, accessing existing and new residential links to main employment sites (i.e. Milton Park) and enterprise zones.

A planning application including the preliminary designs will be submitted in Autumn 2021, where an additional public event will be held. Construction of all identified transport projects should be completed in 2023-2024.



ACTIVE TRAVEL

The Science Vale Cycle Network (SVCN) progressed throughout 2020, with construction taking place to improve the routes with £5.8 million being invested. Five cycle routes are now complete, which contributes to the first phase of the project. More than 10km of cycle and pedestrian paths are now open.

These routes link all the key employment zones including Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre with Abingdon, Wantage and Didcot, inclusive of Didcot Parkway.

The DGT team sit on the MultiCAV consortium which is a project to deliver autonomous bus trials between Milton Park and Didcot Parkway. It is estimated that the first on road pilot will be tested in the third quarter of 2021.

A 600-space cycle parking facility was constructed at Didcot Parkway by Great Western Railway in October 2020. As part of the MultiCAV project, a dedicated space for e-bikes and branding for MiLink App (journey planner) was located at the central base.



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

To support the vibrant community and build on the town's popularity, the DGT team worked on various projects during 2020.

Our Arts Development Officer continued to support community engagement through the arts. To help residents connect to nature in the initial national lockdown, a 'Make a Leaf' competition was launched virtually, where participants used their creative skills to make a wish for Didcot.

Public art has been built throughout the garden town, with an arts trail on the Great Western Park (GWP) development now complete. A map showcasing a variety of different facilities and accessing opening space was curated and will be launched in the summer holidays in 2021. This is to encourage placemaking and active travel but most importantly to celebrate the great amenities in the garden town.

Meanwhile spaces have been identified as a priority by the local community. They are commonly known as the temporary use of spaces to bring social and economic benefits. Residents have advised DGT on site locations and themes to support services in the garden town. A project was advanced last year to use these spaces around the town to support social and economic recovery following COVID-19. This will be piloted in summer 2021.

The District and Southern Community Centres on Great Western Park were completed in 2020 and transferred to the district councils. They are now open and facilities can be hired by groups and residents through an online booking system on the council's websites.





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