

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Date of meeting: 29 October 2020	AGENDA ITEM NO: 7
Report title: Infrastructure Projects Update	
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1. Purpose of report

1.1 To provide the Bicester Strategic Delivery Board (SDB) with an update on infrastructure projects in and relating to Bicester.

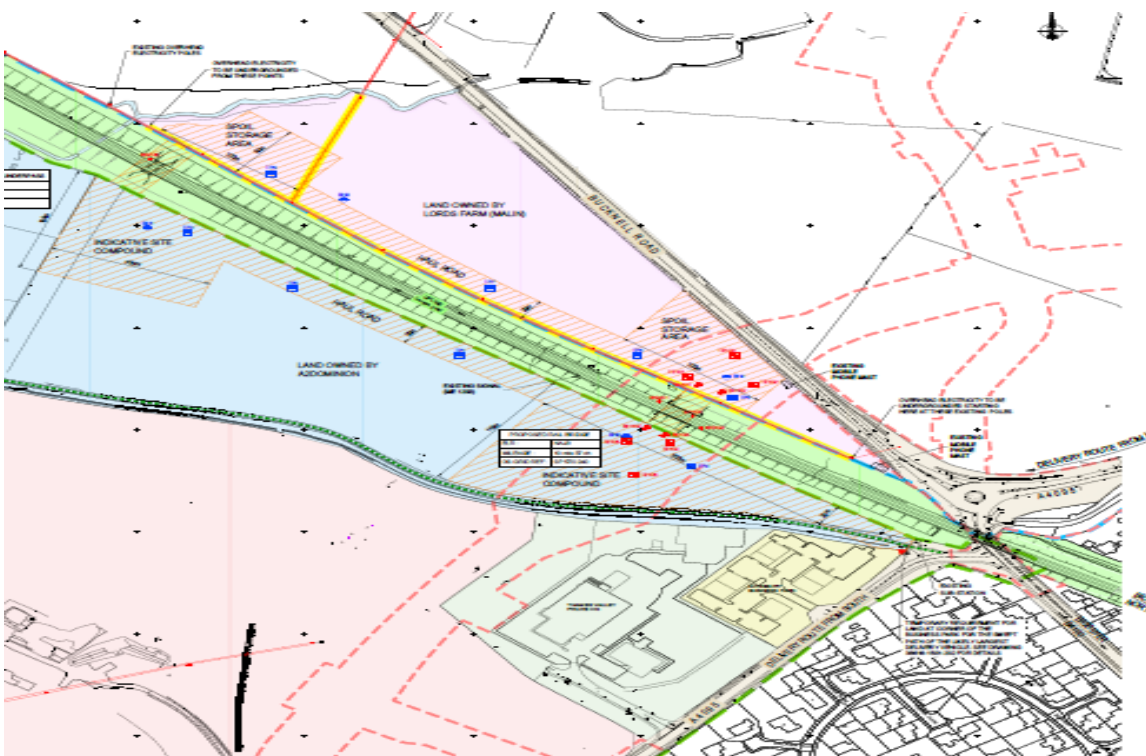
a) North West Bicester Rail Underbridges and realignment of A4095 Howes Lane

1. OCC signed an implementation agreement with Network Rail in April 2020 to build two structures through the railway embankment at Bicester – a concrete underpass and steel underbridge to open up the Eco-town development at Bicester.

Scheme scope

2. The scheme will provide two structures underneath the rail line at Bicester:

- A steel underbridge to accommodate the realigned A4095.
- A concrete underpass about 100m away from the underbridge to provide access for walkers, cyclists and equestrians either side of the railway. Please see illustration below.



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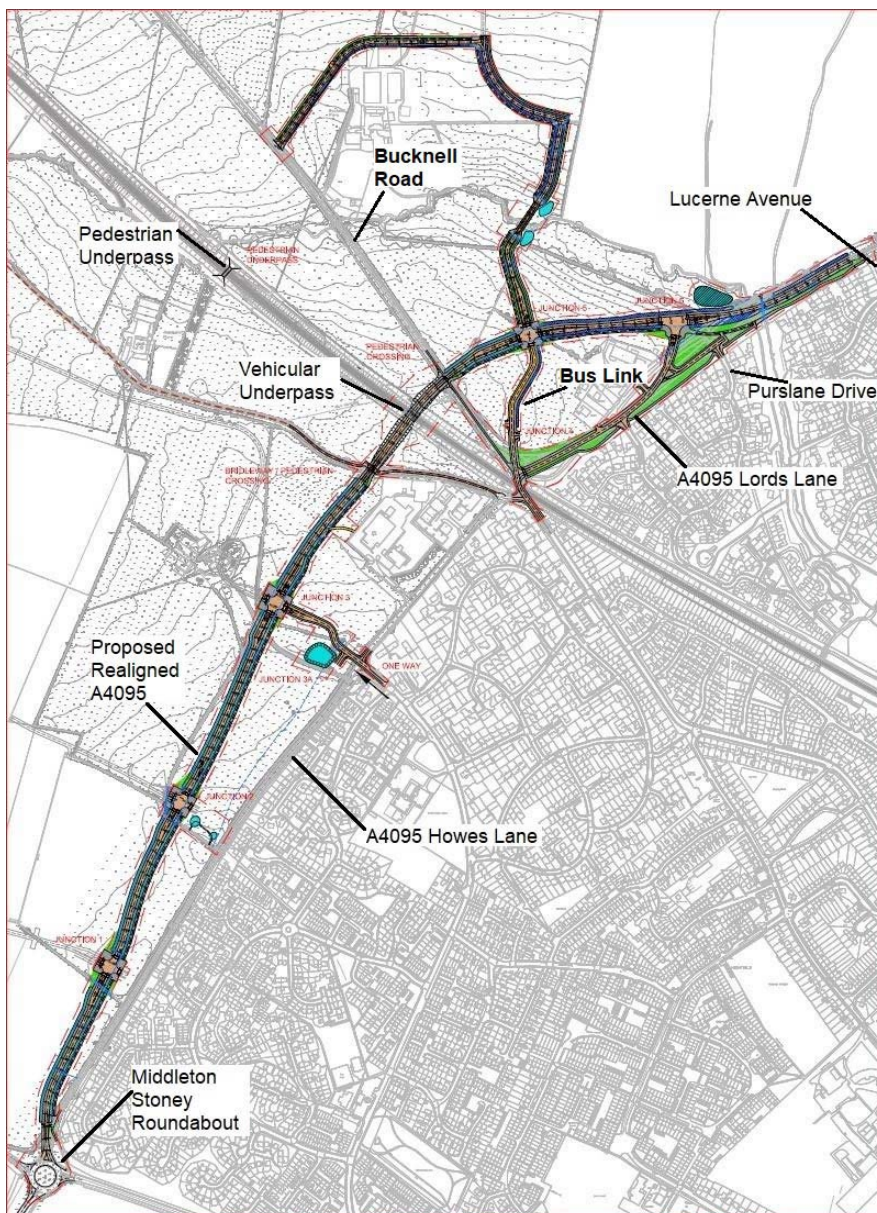
3. Full Planning Approval (Application No: 14/01968/F) was granted on 21st August 2019 for the realignment of the A4095 as shown at below.

Scheme scope

4. The realigned road is currently planned to be delivered in two phases:

Phase 1 - the A4095 will be realigned by creating a new road through the development site. This will start at the A4095 / B4030 Middleton Stoney Road / Vendee Drive / Howes Lane junction and run almost parallel to the existing A4095 (Howes Lane / Lords Lane) cutting through the Eco-Town development site before passing through the new rail underpass to be created near Bucknell Road junction and finish back on the existing A4095 Lords Lane near its junction with Lucerne Avenue.

Phase 2 - a new road starting from the A4095 / Bucknell Road junction to link the northern section of development site joining back with Bucknell Road. This road will include a bus only link between the A4095 / Bucknell Road junction and a new junction with the realigned A4095.



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b) Oxford Cambridge Expressway

5. The Government paused the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project in March in order to consider how roads investment, and other transport investment, can best support the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. Transport work within Bicester needs to positively input into the regional/EEH connectivity studies.

c) London Road Level Crossing

6. Officers explained at the last SDB the work being undertaken to produce an Options Appraisal Report, which is a necessary step to undertake if there is to be a bid for funding for a London Road level crossing solution. This is considering the options of an underpass/bridge at London Road, alternative highway investment in a south east perimeter road and eastern corridor or a high-level investment in active and healthy travel modes.
7. The modelling of the options has been completed and will now be analysed and fed into the Options Assessment Report. There have been some staff changes at OCC but the new officer dealing with this work is expecting to report in early December.
8. Members have made it clear that these are not options as the town needs a solution to the level crossing problem, the peripheral road improvements (including the south east perimeter road) and investment in active and healthy travel measures.
9. As well as the delivery of the Options Appraisal Report, officers will set out the potential way forward for Members to consider. This will need to feed into the Local Plan Review and the update to the area transport strategy within the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan.

d) A41 Corridor Study

10. The A41 is an integral part of the Local Transport Plan area transport strategy for Bicester. In 2015 OCC commissioned Amec Foster Wheeler to complete a preliminary ecological appraisal, provide planning advice and high-level engineering feasibility for optional alignments for the South East Perimeter Road (SEPR) which would realign the A41 through Bicester. The report was consulted upon, but the proposals for a SEPR were put on hold at this stage awaiting the outcome of Garden Town work into proposals for a new motorway junction and awaiting the outcome of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway options work. OCC wrote to CDC asking the district to safeguard the land for the preferred alignment.
11. However, with the Expressway work paused and pressures on the A41 corridor through Bicester increasing, it neither functions well as a strategic route or local distributor road and is a barrier for sustainable movements. OCC Members have therefore called for a review of the A41 corridor and for progress to be made with the SEPR.

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12. Officers have been scoping out the work required, with the aim to fit with the Local Plan Review timetable. The first stage is to set out the issues along the corridor and the objectives and outcomes that are required, and in particular how these fit with the overall transport ambitions of the local authorities. A meeting to discuss these with Members and key stakeholders will be set up. The DfT's Early Assessment Sifting Tool will be used with the aim of identifying two options in time for the Local Plan Options consultation in February.
13. The project team will be made up of officers from OCC and CDC and will be overseen by senior managers to ensure fit with policy and push the programme to meet deadlines. Local Members and Cabinet Members will be closely involved as the work evolves and stakeholders will be integrated into the project from the start.
14. The outcomes need to feed into the Local Plan work to ensure that any further growth impact is mitigated to meet local transport aspirations; inform the updated area transport strategy (within the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan) in terms of any complementary measures within the town, and feed into the EEH regional strategy work in terms of the A41 strategic route.

2. Recommendation

The SDB is asked to note the progress of the infrastructure projects.