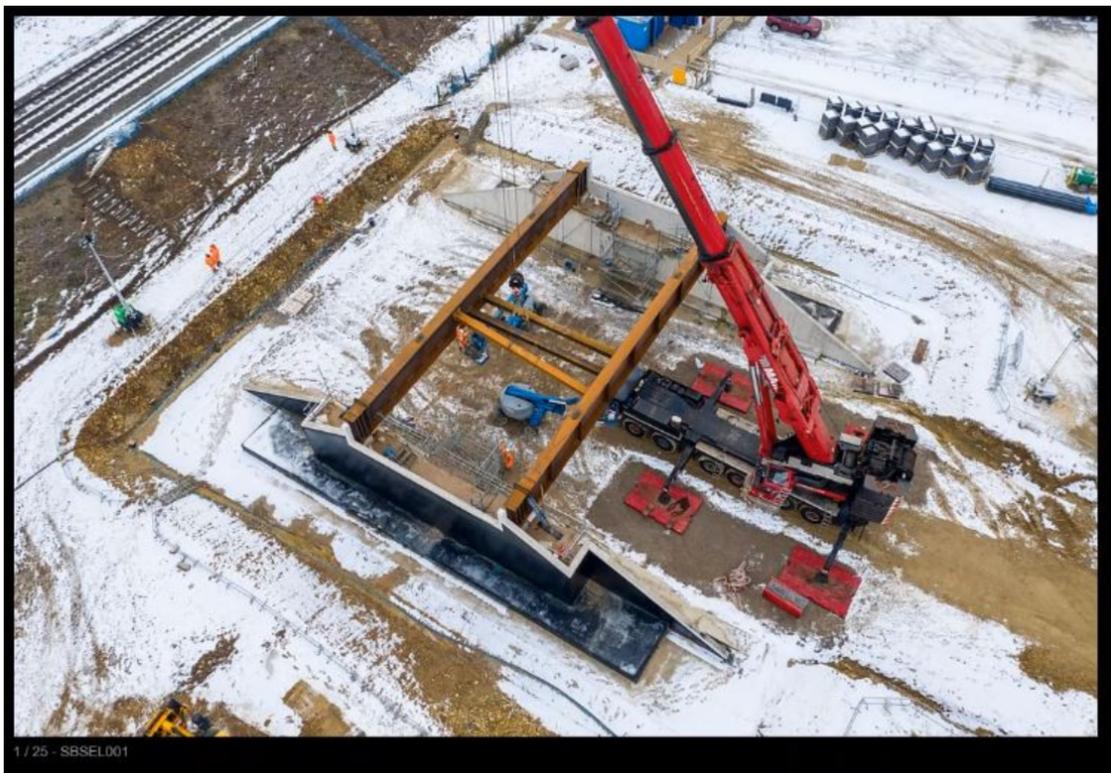


Date of meeting: 4 February 2021	AGENDA ITEM NO: 7
Report title: Infrastructure Projects Update	
Author: Jacqui Cox, Infrastructure Locality Lead, Oxfordshire County Council	
Email: Jacqui.cox@oxfordshire.gov.uk	

a) North West Bicester Rail Underbridge

1. The road bridge under the railway at North West Bicester is progressing well. The steel deck is starting to be erected on the finished abutments, as shown in the photograph below. The project is on target to transport the bridge and underpass structures into position within the railway embankment during the upcoming four day Easter track closure.



b) A4095 realignment

2. The aim of this project is to realign the existing A4095 along Howes Lane and the western end of Lords Lane in line with the new underbridge below the railway line near Bucknell

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Road/A4095 junction. This will provide an important strategic link for the town and sustainable connections through to the North West Bicester strategic development allocation. Funding will be used to deliver an interim scheme ahead of the development sites progressing, to ensure that there is a road in place once the bridge has been completed. This will relieve residents along Howes Lane as the sites build out.

3. A draft feasibility review has been received from Balfour Beatty for officers to review ahead of any stakeholder engagement.

c) EEH Strategy Work

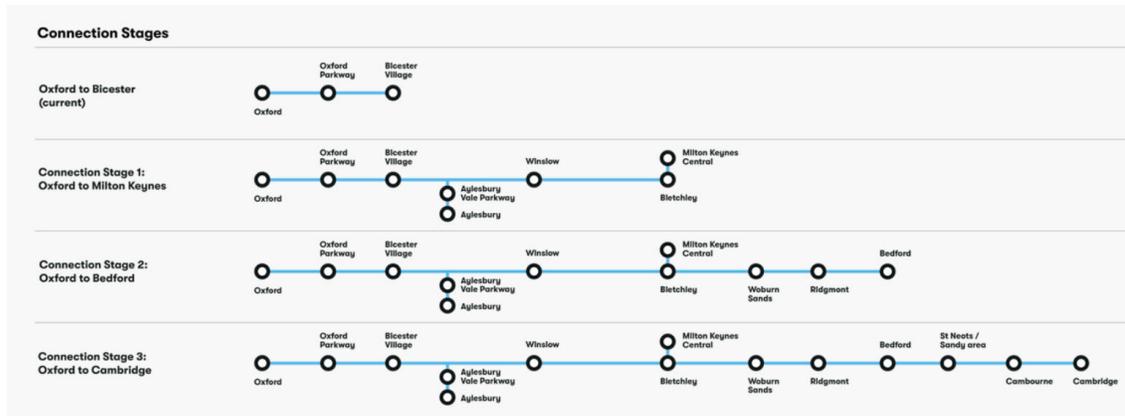
4. England's Economic Heartland (EEH) have been developing a [Transport Strategy](#) for the region. EEH consulted on the draft strategy between 14 July – 6 October 2020 and both Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Growth Board, on behalf of all Oxfordshire Local Authorities, submitted responses* to this.
5. They are currently incorporating the feedback received and will be sharing this with the EEH's Member-led [Strategic Transport Forum](#) on 5th February, with an aim to publish the finalised strategy by the end of February 2021. One area of feedback most notable is that the strategy should be more ambitious on decarbonisation. The final strategy will now include an explicit reference to aim to achieve net-zero by 2040, with an absolute date of no later than 2050.
6. The Transport Strategy commits EEH to the development of a decarbonisation road map over the course of the next 12 months. This will build on the work-to-date and take into consideration the DfT's Transport Decarbonisation Plan once it is published. A programme of Connectivity studies is also planned over the next year, which Oxfordshire County Council will be involved in through the programme's Steering Group. Output recommendations from these studies will feed into the Transport Strategy's recommended Investment Pipeline with the purpose of reflecting the region's infrastructure priorities.

* Links to consultation responses from [Oxfordshire County Council 13 Oct 2020 Cabinet paper – Annex 2](#) and [Oxfordshire Growth Board 22 Sept 2020 Meeting paper – Annex 2](#)

d) London Road Level Crossing

7. The Government has announced that it has committed £760 million to support the continuation of the East West Rail line. The funding is for part of the line between Oxford and Bletchley/Milton Keynes and means this section will be up and running by 2025.
8. The East West Rail Company is now delivering the infrastructure in “connection stages”, which relate directly to a full journey rather just a piece of track. At each connection stage new services and destinations will be added.

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board



9. The Government committed to investment in Stage 1 in the November 2020. The aim is to have trains running between Oxford and Milton Keynes by 2025 – but it may be that the connection to Bletchley opens at this earlier stage.
10. EWR Company are now preparing for the next Connection Stage, the extension to Bedford. They will start consulting on the baseline situation and their review of work to date this Spring, with the aim of submitting a funding bid for the scheme and its mitigation package in the 2021 Spending Review towards the end of this year.
11. This year will therefore be crucial in terms of identifying what the mitigation solution is for London Road level crossing as this will be impacted further by additional services and freight movements along the line. EWR Company are discussing looking options, including a new tunnel/bridge and also a package of alternative measures.
12. The Options Appraisal Report for London Road level crossing has been completed by OCC officers and is currently going through review. This work has been funded by the EWR Consortium and is also being discussed with its officers and board. The findings and implications for EWR options work will be discussed with Members and other key stakeholders.

e) A41 Corridor Study

13. OCC have recently commissioned Steer to undertake the study of the A41 corridor from its junction with M40 Junction 9 and the Oxfordshire county boundary, east of Bicester. The study will comprise an assessment of a range of potential schemes and interventions to determine preferred options to address existing issues along the corridor. The aim is to have two 'preferred options' to feed into the Cherwell Local Plan Review and also into England's Economic Heartland's Connectivity Studies.
14. This part of the work on this corridor will produce an Options Assessment Report, including high level cost estimates and benefits realisation by the end of May. There will be a strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement throughout the work.

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

15. 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.

f) Market Square

16. OCC officers are looking to commission an urban design consultancy to consider the options for an enhanced mixed-use space for this key part of the town centre and the transport elements that would feed into this. The project brief is currently being drafted, with the aim to complete this phase of the work by the end of the Summer with a preferred option to take forward into the design process.

g) South West Bicester Active Travel Measures

17. A route to connect south west Bicester with the town centre for active and healthy travel modes is being funded by the LEP, based on the Government's Active Travel Fund initiative. A key stakeholder workshop was held during December and the scheme is now out to public consultation to present the package of measures and receive any detailed comments or feedback.
18. The majority of the scheme needs to be delivered by the end of March, which means that the formal Traffic Regulation Order consultations for the proposed 20mph, Causeway restrictions, crossings and footpath conversions are therefore taking place concurrently with the wider consultation, and notices have had to be published to prepare for the construction phase.

h) Incremental planning permissions and the impact on highways

19. The National Planning Policy Framework requires that development sites are considered on their own merits and there are assessment tests to ensure planning requirements are reasonable. Where there are a number of sites coming forward within close proximity, such as along the A41 corridor, this can result in piecemeal delivery of highway infrastructure. The only ways to combat this are either to have a masterplan and Supplementary Planning Guidance in place to cover a number of neighbouring sites or have a very detailed transport strategy that the developers contribute towards.