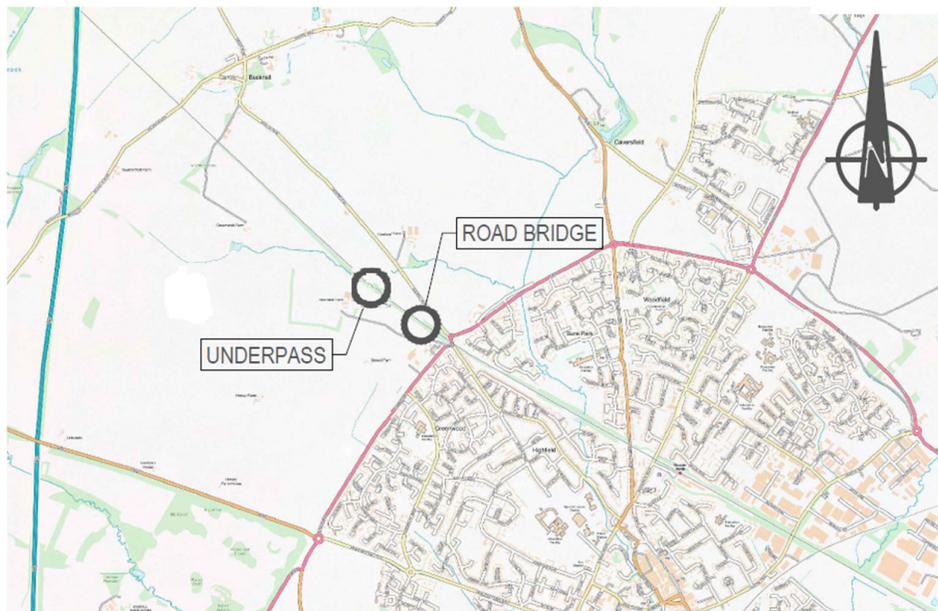


<b>Date of meeting: 18 March 2021</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM NO:  7</b>
<b>Report title: Holistic report on infrastructure projects</b>	
<b>Author: Jacqui Cox, Infrastructure Locality Lead, Oxfordshire County Council</b>	
<b>Email: <a href="mailto:Jacqui.cox@oxfordshire.gov.uk">Jacqui.cox@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a></b>	

**a) NW Bicester rail under-bridges and realignment of A4095 Howes Lane**

1. The prefabrication of the new road bridge and pedestrian underpass in the field just to the south of the railway are both complete and the structures are now ready to be transported into their final position within the railway embankment during the upcoming four-day track closure planned for this Easter. In the period between now and then, trackway and self-propelled modular transport units which will lift and move the structures into position will be delivered to site, assembled and tested. Additionally, a claim to draw down the first £2.5m of £6.7M of available Homes England HIFmv funding has now been successfully made.



2. The scheme to realign the A4095 away from Howes Lane to run under the new bridge is progressing. The consultants, Stantec, have carried out a review of the consented scheme and the recommendations made by PJA Consultancy to consider ways of reducing the cost of the proposals. The current work has also included a review of the compliance of the scheme against the DfT's LTN 1/20 cycle Infrastructure Design guidance.

## Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

3. The consultants have shared a draft design and options statement with officers for review and consideration. Once these have been considered and recommendations accepted this report will be shared. This has included consideration of the junction designs, whether a reduced carriageway width would be appropriate, the footway/cycleway provision and signalised crossings. In order to be compliant with LTN 1/20 it is recommended that the eastern footway/cycleway is widened to allow for suitable segregation. The width and gradient as the highway passes under the new bridge requires further design consideration.
4. The current work is expected to recommend an interim scheme that delivers the basic road and footways/cycleways but leaves some elements of the scheme, including some of the signalised junctions and the northern link to be delivered as a later phase.
5. It is intended that a s73 planning application will be submitted to Cherwell District Council to make amendments to the existing consent. The expected programme for delivery at this stage is:

### A4095 Realignment Scheme Programme:

- Bridge Completion-July '21
- Realignment Feasibility-Mar '21
- s73 Planning Application-Jun '21
- Preliminary Design-Jun '21
- Construction start-Jun '22
- Construction completion-May '24

## **b) EEH Strategy Work and OxCam Arc Spatial Framework announcement**

6. England's Economic Heartland (EEH) has published their finalised [Regional Transport Strategy](#) on 26 February 2021, accompanied by a useful [Summary Report](#). As previously shared with this Board, 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.
7. The EEH Member-led [Strategic Transport Forum](#) approved the strategy at their meeting on 5 February. It is important to note that, while the EEH Transport Strategy is non-statutory and does not override or supersede any local Transport Strategy approved by its individual constituent Highway Authorities, it does provide an important sub-national framework for strategic transport planning in Oxfordshire. A paper is going to [Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet on 16 March 2021](#) to seek their endorsement.
8. In summary, the EEH Transport Strategy sets out how the region will:

## Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

- a. Focus on decarbonising our transport system by harnessing innovation and supporting solutions which in themselves create green economic opportunities
  - b. Promote investment in digital infrastructure as a means of improving connectivity
  - c. Use the delivery of strategic public transport schemes – such as East West Rail, the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro and Milton Keynes Mass Rapid Transit - as the catalyst for a shift towards lower carbon modes of travel
  - d. Champion increased investment in active travel and shared transport to improve local connectivity to ensure that everyone can realise their potential
  - e. Continue to ensure the needs of the freight and logistics sector are met whilst lowering its environmental impact.
9. MHCLG have released a paper on 18 February 2021 that sets out the government's plan for developing a [long-term spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#). The paper sets out the government's planned approach to developing the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework, including a timeline for delivery, its high-level scope, and how they will work with local partners. Whilst there is a strong emphasis in the report on working collaboratively with communities, we await further details on how Local Authorities will be able to get involved. It is worth noting in the interim that the paper states that there will be 3 stages of consultation in development of the framework; on a **Vision** in summer 2021, on a **Towards a Spatial Framework** document in Spring 2022, and on a draft **Spatial Framework** in Autumn 2022.

\* [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](#)

### c) London Road Level Crossing

10. The need to find a longer-term solution to the London Road, Bicester issue is becoming more important, as the plans for the next stage of East West Rail (Milton Keynes to Cambridge) come forward. In particular, it is understood that East West Rail Company are currently working towards submission of a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the next section and want to be sure that impacts of train service increases on the already consented/operational part of the route are appropriately mitigated. This includes London Road, Bicester.
11. An Options Appraisal Report was funded through the East West Rail Consortium Work Programme, with the work undertaken by the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Innovation Team (iHub), in association with transport modelling undertaken by consultants WYG using the Bicester model. This work sets out and appraises options for interventions that will help enable continued access to and from Bicester town centre as level crossing down-time increases in line with train service frequencies.

## **Bicester Strategic Delivery Board**

12. The options assessment tool that is used for transport schemes requires analysis of individual measures – in this case a direct highway intervention at London Road, investment in alternative highway measures in the town (south east perimeter road and eastern peripheral road improvements), and a package to strongly deliver on walking and cycling measures within the town. For this work, the assessment was undertaken using the Bicester model, and other relevant evidence, allowing for each option to be appraised using the Department for Transport Early Assessment Sifting Tool (EAST).
13. The outcome of the OAR assessment work indicates that the sustainable transport package options generally perform better than the highway options assessed. However, it is recognised that a package of transport measures will be needed to provide a longer-term solution to severance and connectivity issues to the south east of the town.
14. Given that plans to progress East West Rail to the next stage are now being taken forward in more detail, the next year is seen as crucial in determining the required mitigation package associated with London Road. In particular, it will be important to agree whether there is a package of measures that could provide positive connectivity for the town and form part of the wider transport strategy, as an alternative to a direct highway intervention at London Road.

### **d) A41 Corridor Study**

15. Consultants working on the A41 Corridor Study have undertaken a review of past work and existing and emerging policies/strategies, to establish a consolidated evidence base of current and future issues, challenges and opportunities along the Corridor. A draft report for this first stage of work has been received and will inform an Options and Objectives' Workshop to be held on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March.
16. The Workshop will be attended by a range of stakeholders including Town, District and County Councillors, Parish Council representatives and other key businesses and groups. The aim of the workshop is to establish a 'long list' of schemes/ measures to be considered as part of the A41 Corridor Study, and to agree the objectives against which these will be assessed. Information will be circulated in advance of the Workshop including draft objectives for consideration.
17. Following the workshop, the schemes/ measures will be judged against the agreed objectives and supporting assessment criteria, to establish two preferred potential packages of schemes/measures. There will be further stakeholder engagement in May to agree the final composition of the preferred packages before they are taken to wider consultation over the Summer.

### **e) Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**

## Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

18. Following the OCC Cabinet approval of the Bicester LCWIP in November, officers have been developing a rolling programme to get the various schemes assessed, designed, funded and delivered on the ground. The DfT have funded Sustrans to support officers until the end of March to assess outline designs drawn up over recent years against current guidance and to propose schemes along some key corridors in the town.
19. There are some held s106 pots specifically for cycle schemes and the approval of the LCWIP puts Bicester in a strong position to bid for Government funding to assist with the development and delivery of schemes.
20. The first phase of delivery is focussing on the radial routes into the town centre and Quietways within residential areas. Building on the current active travel measures that are being delivered, one of the priority corridors is the Middleton Stoney Road.

### f) Misc.

Scheme Name	Progress made to date	Future planned activity
Active Travel Scheme – Tranche 2  Provision of cycle connectivity measures between south west Bicester and the town centre, together with community activation to support people to use the new facilities	The proposed 20mph speed limit, toucan crossing and shared use footway/cycle tracks have been approved at OCC Cabinet Member Decisions, as well as Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders for waiting restrictions at Loddon Close and Villiers Road and width and loading restrictions on Causeway.  A decision on proposals for a contraflow cycle lane on Causeway have been deferred to enable further consideration of the options and stakeholder discussion.	The delivery team are now on site on Middleton Stoney Road. There are a number of detailed matters to resolve along each section because of the speed at which these measures are having to be delivered to meet the funding requirements.  The report on the options for Causeway is being drawn up to enable stakeholder discussions.
Market Square urban design and transport scheme	A project brief went out to urban design consultants and responses are due back on the 15 <sup>th</sup> March.	Once the consultants are commissioned, they will initially consider the options. This will entail engagement with stakeholders.  This will feed into the town centre re-imagining work and into the review of the area transport strategy.
Banbury Road roundabout improvements	This scheme is out for consultation currently and a stakeholder workshop is being arranged to consider the options.	This is on a fast track delivery with a planning application due for submission this Summer to meet funding deadlines.