

Didcot Garden Town

Note of Advisory Board meeting on Microsoft Teams 21 July, 10 to 12noon

Attendance:

Board Members

Chair: Liz Leffman (LL), Leader, Oxfordshire County Council
David Rouane (DR), Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council
Bethia Thomas (BT) Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council
Helen Pighills (HP), Vale of White Horse District Council
Rita Atkinson (RA), Sutton Courtenay Parish Council
Kelly-Marie Morrison (KM), Leader, Didcot Town Council
David Pryor (DP), Chair Didcot First

Other attendees

Judy Roberts (JR), OCC Cabinet Member and Vale of White Horse Member
Tony Worgan (TW), SODC Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader DTC
Phil Barker (PB), Head of Communities, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council
Jayne Bolton (JB), Community Wellbeing Manager
Nicky Wyer (NW), Didcot Garden Town Team Leader
Emma East (EE), Didcot Garden Town Project Manager
Dionne Freeman (DFr), Didcot Garden Town Project Officer
Lenka Devereux (LD), Business Support Officer, Community Wellbeing
Andrew Busby (AB), Head of Development and Corporate Landlord
Nick Bennett (NB), Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Nick King (NK), Economic Development Manager
Sean Thornton-Mills (ST-M), Enterprise Zones Partnership Manager
Lyn Russell (LR), Project Officer (Housing)
Janet Wheeler (JW), Didcot Town Council Clerk
Julia Hawkins (JH), OCC Operations Manager Placemaking & Transport
Karina Santiago (KS), Senior Transport Planner – South and Vale, OCC
Tom Wilkins (TW), OCC Area Travel Plans Technical lead
Dan Fenn (DF), OCC Project Manager (South and Vale)

Apologies

Robin Bennett (RB), Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council
Nigel Tipple (NT), CEO Enterprise Oxfordshire
Sian Carter (SC), Senior Partnership & Business Development Manager Homes England
Charlotte Cottingham (CC), Didcot Garden Town Programme Manager
Wendy Foster (WF), Community Development Officer, South and Vale Garden Communities team
Di Chesterman (DC), Sustainable Didcot
Jon Palmer (JP), South and Vale Enterprise Zones team

	Notes	Action
1.	Introductions and apologies Apologies noted above.	

2.	Declarations and conflicts of interest None	
3.	Notes of previous meeting and matters arising The meeting note from 17 March 2025 was approved. All actions were marked as complete or to be addressed later in the agenda.	
4.	Public participation None	
5.	<p>District council development at 116-120 Broadway –</p> <p>Item presented by Andrew Busby, Head of Development and Corporate Landlord (South).</p> <p>Project Overview: AB opened with an overview of the proposed development, supported by a presentation. He emphasised the flexible ground floor design, which has been planned to allow for different uses over time. All utilities and layout considerations are designed with long-term adaptability in mind.</p> <p>Heritage Preservation: In response to a question from DP about preserving historical features AB assured colleagues that the team is working closely with heritage officers. The goal is to balance preservation with sustainability by bringing the building up to Passive House standards while maintaining as much of its original fabric as possible.</p> <p>Community Use Potential: DR expressed the importance of the space serving the local community. Although unsuitable as a children's centre due to limited outdoor play areas, there is openness to other community uses. Possibility remains for the Train organisation to return to the site.</p> <p>Security & Access: AB reassured colleagues and confirmed access to garden areas will be controlled via a secure gate requiring a residential access code. LL followed up with a question on maintenance, to which AB responded that Council-owned team, supported by Oxford Direct Services (ODS), will manage upkeep of both buildings and grounds.</p> <p>Design & Safety Considerations: AB responded to RA questions and acknowledged there will be no on-site parking due to the town centre location. Flat roof design has been carefully reviewed to meet durability</p>	<p>DGT team to circulate the presentation with the meeting note.</p> <p>AB to bring an update to the next Advisory Board meeting.</p>

	<p>and insulation standards. The communal garden space will be secure and intended for residents, including younger people, to use safely.</p> <p>The chair thanked AB for the update and answering all questions. A further update will be expected at the next meeting.</p>	
6.	<p>Oxfordshire County Council Project Updates</p> <p>Julia Hawkins, Place Planning Manager (South) presented this item, supported by Tom Wilkins, Technical Lead (MAPS) and Dan Fenn, Project Manager Infrastructure Delivery</p> <p>Movement & Place Plans (MPP) – Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCC is transitioning from outdated Local Transport Plan 4 strategies (2016) to new Movement and Place Plans (MPP), forming part two of the LTCP (Local Transport & Connectivity Plan). MPPs aim to tailor transport and infrastructure objectives at a local level, starting with the Science Vale area. They prioritise place shaping – focusing not only on movement but also on the function and identity of public spaces (e.g. town centres, high streets). <p>Policy Integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPPs will align with other OCC strategies such as Active Travel, Freight & Logistics, and Bus Strategy. All local objectives are mapped to nine overarching outcomes already agreed by OCC. Concerns noted around ensuring community-specific needs are not overlooked in broader county-wide planning. <p>Place Shaping Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a shift towards designing schemes that enhance quality of place – not just movement efficiency. Examples given (e.g. Wantage Market Place, Broadway) highlight the importance of balancing transport access with community space. Acknowledgement that not all roads serve the same function – main roads vs. pedestrian-friendly community hubs. <p>Community Engagement & Learning from past projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DF stressed the importance of listening to communities rather than designing schemes solely from an office. 	<p>JH's team to finalise draft Science Vale Movement & Place Plan including revised priorities, ensuring that objectives remain aligned with LTCP vision and local planning policy.</p> <p>JH's team to prepare and share construction management plans for Advisory Board feedback.</p> <p>JH's team to engage local communities in design and delivery stages.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCC recognised previous issues (e.g. with A34 projects) and is actively applying lessons learned. There is a commitment to involve residents earlier, particularly regarding construction impacts and traffic management during works. <p>Project Delivery & Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Science Vale strategy is being updated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Past actions reviewed (completed, in-progress, or not started). Revised to reflect new policy goals and incorporate place shaping principles. A prioritised project list is being developed as a long-term delivery plan (10–15 years). <p>Concerns Raised During Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for local context: MPPs must avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and stay grounded in local realities. Construction disruption: There is concern about the impact of future works (e.g. road closures). OCC agreed to minimise disruption using smarter traffic management plans. Transparency: OCC committed to making the construction management plans available for public scrutiny. Community involvement: Emphasis placed on involving affected residents early in the design and delivery process to avoid repeating mistakes from past projects. 	
7.	<p>DGT Programme Review and Community Update (draft Cabinet Report)</p> <p>Item presented by Nicola Wyer, Didcot Garden Town Leader and Emma East, Didcot Garden Town Project Manager:</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NW provided a high-level overview of the programme's progress over the last quarter, referencing the draft Cabinet Report and associated documents. Draft Healthy Didcot Action Plan & Community Insight Profile: These documents were circulated to all board members on 5 June and included in the meeting pack. The draft plan is informed by updated demographic data and local feedback. DP proposed collaboration between Didcot Community Forum and Didcot Garden Town Officers. Neighbourhood Plan Preparation: 	DGT Officers to meet with DP for further discussion between Didcot Community

8.	<p>Other DGT Programme highlights – presentation by DGT team</p> <p>EE provided an update on key project areas:</p> <p>Wayfinding Implementation: Wayfinding Signage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed surveys completed by Landmark to support planning applications. Strategic Property Team engaging with landowners for signage installation and removal. • Positive engagement with partners including Great Western Railway, Network Rail, Sustrans, Sustainable Didcot, local residents' groups, and MyVision Oxfordshire. • A full-size mock-up sign has been displayed at Didcot Civic Hall. • Revised project completion target: December 2025, due to delays. <p>Green Infrastructure – Zone Updates</p> <p>Zone 1 (Cornerstone area)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept shared by Groundwork London includes tree and shrub planting to improve public space around Station Road and the marketplace. Costing underway; additional funding will be required. <p>Zone 2 (Ladygrove)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals include wildflower planting, public art, seating, food-growing areas, and a BBQ space along the Ladygrove Loop green corridor. • Concerns raised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ JR noted planting restrictions under pylons and resident concerns over EMF exposure. ◦ DR relayed previous scrutiny feedback questioning investment in Ladygrove, though he disagrees. <p>Zones 3 & 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future work will focus on the National Cycle Route to Mowbray Fields and onward to Great Western Park. • Noted alignment with wayfinding scheme. <p>Climate Consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA asked about integration of climate resilience; EE to raise BBQ-related safety concerns with contractors. <p>Energy Champions Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight residents trained as energy advisors to support local households. 50 residents assisted to date; resources include advice packs and energy-saving 	
----	---	--

giveaways. Positive feedback received; new supplies ordered ahead of winter 2025.

Garden Party – presentation by Dionne Freeman

DF provided an update on key project areas:

- Following the success of the July Garden Party (the last fully funded by the Garden Town team), to coordinate events under the Didcot Garden Town identity, discussions are underway to support future events in collaboration with:
 - Sustainable Didcot
 - Didcot Town Council
 - Better Leisure
 - Active Communities
 - Cornerstone Arts Centre
 - Didcot TRAIN (hosting a mental health festival at Cornerstone this Thursday)

Public Art Plan

- Progressing well with:
 - 4 live projects and 7 more in development.
 - Cow Lane ‘Connecting Communities’ project: Will feature an outdoor gallery and creative lighting in the underpass (funded by GWR Community Investment Fund).
 - Collaborations with:
 - Community Safety Team
 - Green Infrastructure consultants (focusing on Ladygrove, Cornerstone area, and Didcot Hospital)
 - Didcot Hospital: Artwork being co-designed with staff and patients as part of the welcome features.
- DF invited members to reach out for more detailed discussions or visuals.

Bright Benches & Planters

- Recycled steel planters and new hardwood benches (UKSPF-funded) installed outside Cornerstone in March with support from Sustainable Didcot and TRAIN volunteers.
- Benches have proven popular; plants are being maintained through dry weather by officers.

	<p>Leisure and Recreation Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather than commissioning a new strategy, the Garden Town team extracted Didcot-specific data from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Leisure Facilities Strategy 2023–2041 ◦ Playing Pitch Strategy 2023–2041 • Documents support planning decisions and S106 agreements. • PDFs shared with Advisory Board members; slides to be circulated separately. • RA asked if a comprehensive risk assessment exists for Didcot Garden Town, especially considering possible governance changes (e.g. unitary authority). This will be considered and discussed at future meetings. 	<p>Didcot Garden Town Risk Assessment scope and purpose to be discussed at the next Advisory Board meeting.</p>
<p>The next Advisory Board meeting will be an online Teams meeting on Monday 20 October 2025, 10am to midday.</p>		