

# Didcot Garden Town

## Note of Advisory Board meeting on Microsoft Teams 20 April 2026, 10 to 12noon

### ATTENDANCE:

#### Board Members

Chair: Liz Leffman, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council  
Bethia Thomas, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council  
Helen Pighills, Cabinet Member for Vale of White Horse District Council  
Tony Worgan, obo. Leader, Cabinet Member for South Oxfordshire District Council  
Anne-Marie Simpson, Cabinet member for South Oxfordshire District Council  
David Pryor, Chair of Didcot First  
David Rouane, obo Leader Didcot Town Council

#### Garden Communities team, South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils

Nicky Wyer, Garden Communities Team Leader  
Emma East, Didcot Garden Town Project Manager  
Dionne Freeman, Didcot Garden Town Project Officer  
Lenka Devereux, Community Wellbeing Business Support Officer

#### Other attendees – South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

Jayne Bolton, Community Wellbeing Manager  
Phil Barker, Head of Communities

#### Other attendees – Oxfordshire County Council

Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Oxfordshire County Council  
Julia Hawkins, Operations Manager Placemaking & Transport  
Timothy Mann, Programme Lead updating on the HIF1 scheme  
Karina Santiago, Senior Transport Planner – South and Vale  
Burhan Khan, Project Manager NPR3, Oxfordshire County Council

#### Other attendees – Didcot Town Council

Lucy Blake, Deputy Town Clerk, Didcot Town Council

#### APOLOGIES:

Sian Carter (SC), Senior Partnership & Business Development Manager Homes England  
Nick Glover, Interim CEO Enterprise Oxfordshire England  
Charlotte Cottingham, Didcot Garden Town Programme Manager  
Rita Atkinson, Chairman of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council  
Janet Wheeler, Town Clerk for Didcot Town Council  
Kelly-Marie Morrison, Leader of Didcot Town Council  
Carmella Anderson, Leisure Development Officer  
Andrea Bridgeman, Project Manager Construction & Asset Manager  
Tom Rice, Planning Infrastructure Team Leader  
Mark Gregory, Team Leader for Behaviour Change and Travel Plans

1.	<p><b>Introductions and apologies</b> - apologies noted above.</p> <p>Councillor Rouane confirmed that he is attending on behalf of Cllr Morrison.</p> <p><b>Declarations and conflicts of interest</b> - none</p>
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2.	<b>Public participation</b> – none.
3.	<p><b>Actions from previous meeting on 20 October 2025 and matters arising</b></p> <p>The Chair reviewed the actions arising from the previous meeting, and the following updates were noted:</p> <p><b>Actions from previous meeting on 26 January 2026 and matters arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In addition to an action to share information with Didcot Town Council</b>, the district councils’ Development and Corporate Landlord team is to provide a summary of Great Western Park land transfers and commuted sums for the Advisory Board.</li> <li>• Didcot Garden Town team to check whose responsibility it is to empty the bin overflowing with poo bags at Hagbourne Triangle Bridge and report it. <b>Action complete (copy of guidance included in Board papers.)</b></li> <li>• David Pryor to provide an update on flooding at Moorbrook, Milton Park at the next meeting and share formal notes with Cllr Rita Atkinson. <b>Action in progress – meeting scheduled for 21 April and update to be given at the next Board meeting.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>New actions from 20 April 2026</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCC to confirm process for removing unauthorised flags on street lighting and flyposting, and provide an update to the Board</li> <li>• Emma East to find out more in response to a query from Cllr Worgan about barriers and bollards that appear to have been removed at Ladygrove.</li> <li>• Emma East to raise with districts’ Technical Services team, an issue with unsightly nature of temporary fencing around former play equipment.</li> <li>• Emma East to share with David Pryor the map of Zone 4 green infrastructure improvements.</li> <li>• DGT team to seek an update at a future Advisory Board meeting from the Climate Action team on progress with the heat network feasibility study.</li> <li>• OCC’s NPR3 team and Comms to prepare a public-facing statement of the update for member use.</li> </ul>
4.	<p><b>Didcot Garden Town projects quarterly update</b></p> <p>The Didcot Garden Town team presented slides that gave more detailed information on project progress. These slides will be circulated and included on the Didcot Garden Town website after the Board meeting, so the notes below do not duplicate that information.</p> <p>The projects discussed were:</p> <p><b>A Community Update Meeting</b> held on 18 March at Cornerstone Arts Centre, attended by approx. 200 people, supported by Didcot Town Council, Community Enablement team, Grants team, Economic Development Team, Oxfordshire County Council and wide corporate teams highlighting plans for LGR. The next</p>

event will be held in September 2026.

Cllr Pryor raised concern about public confusion over council responsibilities, noting social media feedback where queries are often redirected between teams.

### **Healthy Didcot Action Plan**

The February Healthy Didcot networking event brought together approximately 50 participants from local organisations, receiving positive feedback and strong engagement. Shared objectives from the event are currently being finalised and Dionne Freeman confirmed those will be shared with the Healthy Didcot group. Further updates, including project outcomes, photos, and data, will be presented at the next meeting.

Dionne Freeman noted limited current engagement with the community hospital but confirmed ongoing discussions to strengthen links with Healthy Didcot work. Nicola Wyer added that the Didcot Patient Participation Group Chair is involved in the steering group and that a Community Health Development Officer will support closer work with GP practices on prevention and early intervention. It was noted that a site visit will take place to identify further repair needs, ensuring a full renewal of the space during the closure period.

### **Cow Lane public art**

Cllr Rouane raised a point that communications should emphasise maintenance and cleaning works alongside any artwork to avoid negative public perception. Dionne Freeman confirmed that the project scope includes comprehensive improvements, not solely artwork. This includes deep cleaning, repair works, replacement of damaged signage, drainage improvements, and lighting upgrades delivered in partnership with Network Rail and Oxfordshire County Council.

Dionne Freeman informed colleagues that £15,000 funding has been secured through the Great Western Park Community Investment Fund for the “Connecting Communities” project, focusing on heritage and extending artwork beyond the station interior. Members welcomed the funding and ongoing creative improvements, noting the positive impact of station-based artwork.

Cllr Worgan highlighted the opportunity to carry out minor footway repairs and vegetation clearance at the Ladygrove end during the closure to avoid repeat works. Dionne Freeman confirmed the Probation Service will undertake vegetation clearance and that the closure has been scheduled to minimise disruption, with pedestrian and cycle access largely maintained.

Phil Barker confirmed he will oversee press and communications messaging.

### **Green infrastructure Zone 1a (Central Didcot)**

Emma East updated on the Green Infrastructure project for Central Didcot, including planting schemes and enhancements near Didcot Station. Network Rail and Great Western Railway have agreed in principle, subject to formal approvals.

A query was raised about flags on street lighting and unauthorised flyposting, which will be followed up by Oxfordshire County Council to confirm responsibility. See new actions above.

Emma East reported that three new trees have been planted at the Orchard Centre entrance and will be maintained by the County Council. Further wildflower and

yellow rattle planting are planned. Tender preparations are underway, with ongoing discussions with landowners.

### **Green infrastructure Zone 1b (Central Didcot)**

Emma East noted that British Land will now manage improvements to the Cornerstone stairs and planters under their maintenance contract, so these have been removed from the project. The focus has shifted to exploring a possible new planter in the nearby stepped green area, subject to site constraints.

### **Green infrastructure Zone 2 (Ladygrove)**

Emma East confirmed the tender pack is expected at the end of the month and that disused play equipment is being removed, with potential reuse of timber being explored for a feature in Ladygrove.

Cllr Worgan raised concerns about removed barriers and bollards, about which Emma East will find out more. See new actions above.

Cllr Rouane noted that temporary fencing remains for safety and access control but is visually intrusive; Emma East will raise this with technical services. See new actions above.

### **Green infrastructure Zone 3 (Jubilee Roundabout to Hagbourne Road)**

Focusing on selective tree and vegetation clearance to improve sight lines while maintaining biodiversity, alongside measures to improve lighting, safety, and path usability.

Cllr Rouane highlighted issues with uneven surfacing along parts of the path, particularly around a corner section, noting accessibility concerns for wheelchair users. Emma East confirmed this will be reviewed as part of the design development.

Cllr Worgan queried whether Zone 4 would be upgraded to a continuous hard surface suitable for all users; Emma East confirmed the surface will be reviewed in future design work.

Cllr Pryor requested clarification of the Zone 4 route and raised a potential land interest; Emma East agreed to circulate a map and provide further detail. See new actions above.

### **Wayfinding**

Emma East reported that advertisement consent for wayfinding signs has been granted and technical queries resolved. Street works licences for 49 signs are being submitted in grouped zones to reduce costs, with landowner permissions still being secured. Tree protection guidance has been issued to contractors.

### **Heart of Science Vale**

A feasibility study is underway to explore a heat network using waste heat (including from data centres), covering design, viability, and costs. The study will take around six months and includes engagement with key stakeholders.

Didcot has been identified for heat network zoning, though current plans don't yet include data centre heat opportunities. Additional funding has been secured to explore expanding and linking heat network zones across district areas.

	<p>DGT Team confirmed that liaison with OCC is in place feeding into the Oxfordshire local energy plans. See new actions above.</p> <p><b>Didcot Garden Party 2026 and onwards</b></p> <p>The South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council events website can be used to promote free community and family events, including the Didcot Garden Party, and the link will be shared more widely. <a href="#">Visit Southern Oxfordshire</a></p> <p><a href="#">Be Inspired for your next day out, or short break</a></p> <p>Sustainable Didcot, through the Healthy Didcot Commission, is supporting the Garden Party with event programming and promotional materials to strengthen community engagement.</p> <p><b>District council’s development at 116-120 Broadway</b></p> <p>The Homes England funding bid for 116–120 Broadway was submitted in March 2026, with ongoing liaison to provide any further information required.</p> <p>The main contractor procurement has progressed, with unsuccessful bidders notified.</p> <p>A community event in March received positive feedback, with strong interest in the proposed ground floor community space and several expressions of interest submitted.</p> <p>The project team will follow up with interested parties regarding potential occupancy.</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Oxfordshire County Council projects quarterly update</b></p> <p>OCC’s team regularly feedback to the Advisory Board and Community Update meetings on works progress including any variations to the programme, continued engagement with parish councils.</p> <p><b>NPR3.</b> The new Project Manager for Didcot NPR3 (Oxfordshire County Council), Burhan Khan, provided an update on the NPR3 infrastructure project. The NPR3 scheme will deliver a new link road from the A4130 towards Haddon Hill, split between OCC (north) and the developer Blare Homes (south), including junctions, walking/cycling infrastructure, and highway upgrades. The southern section depends on a reserved matters application from the developer.</p> <p><b>Progress to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetation clearance completed under ecological supervision but paused due to nesting birds. Ecology surveys completed and under review.</li> <li>• Drainage CCTV surveys completed and Ground Penetrating Radar survey (GPR) for archaeology and topographical survey planned.</li> <li>• Initial design work underway, with further development pending survey results.</li> <li>• Flood risk classification updated (Flood Zone 2/3) and requires further assessment.</li> <li>• Transport modelling being updated due to outdated baseline data.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning submission targeted for end of year.</li> <li>• A public-facing summary of the project update is being prepared and reviewed prior to release.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Worgan highlighted the importance of delivering the project in a single phase where possible. It was noted that planning and preparatory works should be in place to enable delivery by the end of February, to avoid disruption during the bird nesting season.</p> <p>Burhan Khan identified several reasons for a two-year delay to the project including need for a new team, an additional planning assessment and flood zone changes requiring additional risk assessments. A public facing statement will be provided and approved for members to share.</p> <p><b>HIF1.</b> Tim Mann, OCC Programme Lead provided an update on the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The construction phase is now being mobilised across all parts of the scheme, with work underway on finalising construction methodology and managing network impacts with the Network Management team.</li> <li>• to construct the Science Bridge, OCC has appointed VolkerFitzpatrick who are establishing site presence, compounds, and access arrangements.</li> <li>• enabling works continue, including site clearance, archaeology, utility diversions, and coordination with neighbouring developments.</li> <li>• main construction across all parts of the scheme is expected to start within the next quarter.</li> <li>• the programme remains on track, with confidence that funding and delivery milestones will be met.</li> <li>• a reported 14-week closure of Valley Park’s only access route was raised. The Project Manager confirmed a full closure would not be permitted and the issue appears to have arisen as a result of a is likely due to a misunderstanding.</li> <li>• Members highlighted the need for clear, proportionate communications, including regular updates on planned vs delivered works and any variations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Didcot Town Council projects quarterly update</b></p> <p>Lucy Blake provided an overview of Didcot Town Council’s activities and assets in Janet Wheeler’s absence, presented in the slide pack which will be shared after the meeting.</p> <p>Colleagues welcomed such clear and detailed delivery. No questions were raised.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Parish Council projects quarterly update – Rita Atkinson</b></p> <p>Cllr Atkinson unable to attend and present at today’s meeting due to technical issues.</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Advisory Board and Community Update Meeting dates 2026</b></p>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monday 20 July at 10am Advisory Board (online)</li><li>• Wednesday 30 September Community Update Meeting (Harwell Village Hall) – times and other details to be confirmed</li><li>• Monday 19 October at 10am Advisory Board (online)</li></ul> |
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