

Didcot to Culham – new Thames River Crossing. Proposed Scheme – Oxfordshire County Council.

For Information Only

This document and attached plans are intended to update you on the work the county council has been doing to develop proposals for a new crossing of the River Thames.

Significant work is now required to produce a deliverable scheme. When we are at a stage when further design work has been done we will hold a public consultation.

What we are doing?

The county council has recently undertaken an appraisal of the corridor between Culham Science Centre and Didcot to look at providing a new road link and river crossing.

Four route alignments in this corridor have been looked at taking into account:

- Environmental constraints, i.e. river and flood zones;
- Ecological impact, i.e. animal and plant life/habitat;
- Archeological constraints i.e. historical remains;
- Construction costs;
- Route suitability – to provide the transport links required by growth in housing and jobs

To make sure we consider all options we have also looked at two routes outside this immediate area, to provide for the traffic movements we expect:

- A link from A4074 via Brightwell-cum-Sotwell which is ruled out as it does not meet the main travel demands we are providing for.
- Widening of the A34 which is ruled out at present based on cost, and deliverability, as not supported by Highways England as a stand-alone scheme.

Of the 4 alignments, 2 have been ruled out mainly on archeological and cost impact. The remaining 2 will be looked at in more detail through the next stage of the design and appraisal process. See **map 1**, which shows approximate route alignments.

Why are we doing this?

Significant housing and employment growth is planned in the Science Vale area, with 20,000 new jobs, 20,000 new houses and 50,000 new residents anticipated by 2031.

Growth of this magnitude would create unsustainable pressure on the existing highway and public transport network. As a result Oxfordshire County Council has developed a transport strategy to accommodate this growth, illustrated in

map 2. (further details are available on the wider strategy by request, or on our website at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/LTP4ScienceVale>)

A new Thames crossing is an element of the package of transport measures to facilitate housing and employment expansion in the Science Vale area around Didcot and the neighbouring towns. The proposed crossing would link up with a further scheme proposed from Culham Science Centre towards Oxford (A4074), effectively a north-western Clifton Hampden bypass. The network across the area is illustrated in **map 2**.

In November 2015 the Government announced that Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire will have a second Enterprise Zone. It will cover an area of 95 hectares and cover a number of sites to the west of Didcot, including the former site of Didcot A Power Station and land to the south and east of Milton Interchange.

What happens next?

To complete a new road link, including design, public consultation, planning and securing funding, it is likely to take approximately 10 years before construction could start. This fits in the timeframe of the growth for the Science Vale area which is in the Local Plan timescale up to 2031.

Scheme costs are currently estimated at £125 million. The new road and river crossing are a vital element of Didcot's development as a 'Garden Town', as announced in December 2015: 'Garden Town' status will help with the delivery of 15,000 houses and 20,000 high-tech jobs in the Didcot area, and it is expected that more funding will become available to help deliver the infrastructure required as a result of the planned growth in and around the town and in the wider Science Vale area.

Further work will now be done to develop the 2 preferred alignments, to understand any further constraints and costs. During this design stage, full public consultation will be undertaken and we will let you know when the timescales for this are known.

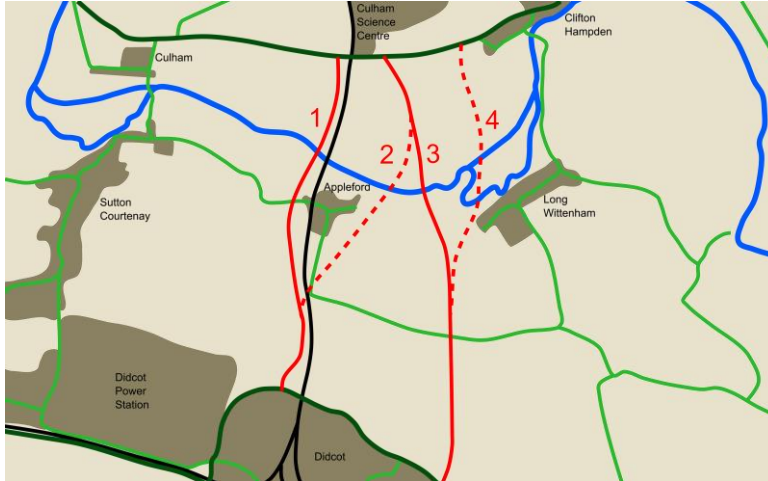
In particular we will take note during public consultation of the potential impact on any residential properties.

A proposal for gravel extraction along route alignment 3 is likely to come forward soon, with a Planning Application expected in the near future. Any gravel extraction would not prevent completion of the new route, as there would be a condition to maintain the route or reinstate it to a suitable condition to allow road construction to go ahead.

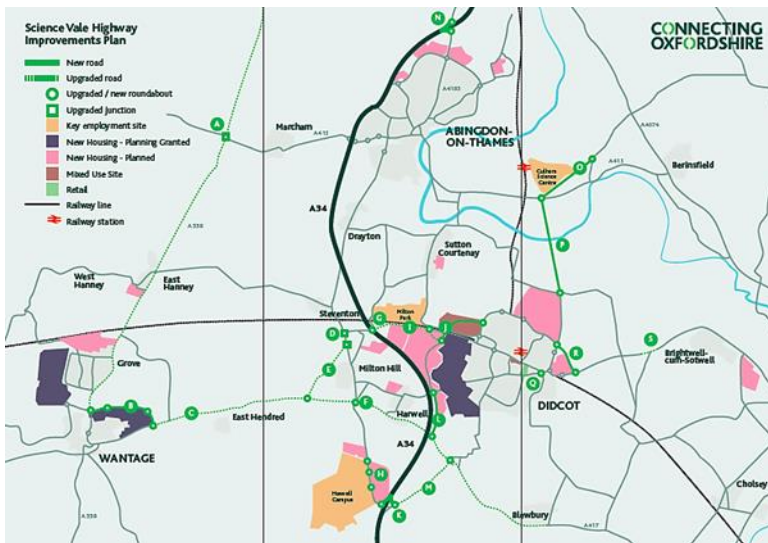
If you have further questions please get in touch with Samantha Tharme at southandvale@oxfordshire.gov.uk or via 01865 792422

Map 1.
Proposed route alignments

Routes 1 and 3 continue to be considered
Routes 2 and 4 have been ruled out for archaeological/cost reasons



Map 2.
Science Vale Strategic Highways Improvement Package



The scheme we are considering is described as P on this map, although the alignment is not exact. All the other network improvements are described more fully in the Local Transport Plan strategy.

*Circulation of briefing note:
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Local Council Members – County and District
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