



Didcot Placemaking Strategy

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ATKINS

Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group

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Purpose & Approach of this Strategy

A Placemaking Strategy to transform Didcot Central Corridor

Didcot was announced as a Garden Town in 2015, resulting in the development of The Didcot Garden Town Development Plan (DGTDP). The DGTDP was published in 2017 to identify the vision, masterplan and opportunities to recreate Didcot as a Garden Town. It is not planning policy but forms a backdrop to current and emerging development proposals for the town and wider area. The plan is a key document which sets out the vision for Didcot.

This Placemaking Strategy was informed by the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (DGTDP) vision as well as by local stakeholder engagement and feedback.

This report is a high level strategy, an initial step covering high level concepts which will inform an Option Appraisal Report (OAR) for assessing the feasibility of various options, to assist with bids for future funding.

The overarching aims and objectives of this Placemaking Strategy take account of the Climate Action Plan for South Oxfordshire District Council and Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) targets and objectives; with ambitions to improve the quality of place in the town and reduce carbon emissions through increased sustainable modes of travel, whilst tackling congestion and reducing the impacts of traffic in the town.

It aims to help build on the existing Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (DGTDP) Vision and stakeholder consensus and must provide an effective foundation for the future pipeline of projects in the town.

This project covers three central routes within Didcot, known collectively as Didcot Central Corridor, as well as a triangle-shaped area including Didcot town centre within these three central routes:

1. The Gateway Spine: A4130 from the proposed Science Bridge (near Sir Frank William's Avenue), B4493, Station Road, Hitchcock Way, Jubilee Way Roundabout and Marsh Bridge Roundabout (junction of Broadway, B4016 and Hadden Hill), to where the Didcot Northern Perimeter Road (NPR3) scheme ties into Hadden Hill.
2. The Cultural Spine: Broadway and Wantage Road and Didcot Road (B4493), to Harwell Link Road.
3. Foxhall Road (B4493).
4. The Triangle: the central area enclosed by the three roads listed above. This includes Haydon Road, Lydalls Road and the Orchard Centre.



Base maps: Google Earth

Purpose & Approach of this Strategy

What is Placemaking?

"Placemaking" focusses on the ongoing relationship between people and the built and natural environment ('spaces'). It's a process which seeks to bring together all parts of the community, and develop a strong sense of 'place'.

Placemaking forms part of Oxfordshire County Council's Healthy Place Shaping approach which aims to create sustainable, well designed, thriving communities where healthy behaviours are the norm and which provide a sense of belonging, identity and community, and is one of the three key workstreams "shaping the built environment, green spaces and infrastructure at a local level to improve health and wellbeing".

Acknowledging that communities make places, but infrastructure can help shape them, this Placemaking Strategy concentrates on Shaping the built environment, providing infrastructure so that people can easily access green spaces and are able to walk, cycle and socially interact.



Where does it apply to?

There are varied opinions about what Placemaking covers. For example, here are some comments that typify perceptions:

"Publicly owned streets, pathways, rights of way, parks, publicly accessible open spaces, public and civic buildings and facilities."

"External places in our towns and cities that are accessible to all. These are the everyday spaces that we move through and linger within, the places where we live work and play."

"All space between buildings."

Considerations

This documents includes consideration of:

- Site survey, document reviews and mapping
- Feedback and comments from stakeholders
- Understanding the context of policy and reinforcing aspects of DGTDP, such as the expression of and connection to the 'Cultural Spine' or other areas
- SWOT analysis to define areas for change
- Definition of character informed by existing design guidance and previous work
- An analysis of spatial form, the visual framework and experiential qualities
- Review of the transport (including pedestrian, cycling and public transport) environment, addressing aspects such as street clutter, accessibility
- Opportunities to retro-fit green infrastructure – such as new tree planting to increase biodiversity that can reduce and slow surface water run-off
- Defining the placemaking features, heritage, materiality, architectural scale and styles which influence the place.

Key Themes

Through assessing feedback from previous stakeholder consultations, combined with the aspirations set out in the DGTDP and other local planning documentation, we identified three key themes of focus.

Place and Space

- More green spaces needed
- Greenery and planting
- Issues regarding perception and branding of the town
- Support for a potential town square



Connectivity and Wayfinding

- Rail line severs the town
- Better footways and footpaths needed
- Cycling currently unconnected
- and unsafe
- Maintenance
- Attractive welcome needed



Transport Infrastructure

- Traffic pinch points
- Frontage of Broadway
- Reopening of Station Road
- Closure of Cow Lane to motor vehicles
- Parking (suitable locations and residential parking)
- Improved access to A34





The image features a dark blue background with a complex, abstract pattern of thin white lines. These lines form a series of interconnected, irregular polygons and triangles, creating a sense of depth and movement. The lines are most prominent in the lower half of the image, where they form a large, multi-faceted shape that resembles a stylized letter 'A' or a similar geometric form. The overall effect is that of a modern, minimalist graphic design.

Existing Context

Context and Characteristics

Didcot Town

The town of Didcot is situated 15 miles south of Oxford. It is strategically well located as an established interchange on the Great Western Railway mainline. Additionally, it is in close proximity to the A34 trunk road (running north-south) which connects with the M4 (to the south) and the M40 (to the north west). The rail and road linkages ensure good connections to London (and Heathrow Airport), Reading, Oxford, Bristol and Birmingham.

With a population of ca. 36,400 (2017 figures) Didcot is one of the largest settlements in Oxfordshire and the principal town of South Oxfordshire District. It lies at the heart of 'Science Vale', the UK's leading area for science, technology, innovation and research.

Science Vale

The Science Vale comprises four main centres, as well as the towns of Didcot and Wantage. Harwell Campus and Milton Park, both awarded Enterprise Zone status in 2012, are located in the Vale of White Horse District (VoWHDC). Harwell Campus is the gateway to the UK's space sector accommodating a cluster of space related businesses. Milton Park is renowned for bioscience and technology. Within South Oxfordshire District (SODC) the Culham Science Centre (CSC), is the focus for European fusion research and technology and is the UK's research centre for autonomous and connected vehicles. The fourth site of Science Vale is the Didcot Growth Accelerator Enterprise Zone within SODC and consists of seven sites around Didcot and a site at the A34 Milton Interchange.

Didcot Central Corridor

The Didcot Central Corridor includes three road corridor sections and an area of land in-between

1. The Gateway Spine
2. The Cultural Spine
3. Foxhall Road (B4493)
4. The Town Centre - "The Triangle" of land in-between these three spines. This includes Haydon Road, Lydalls Road and the Orchard Centre.



Base maps: Google Earth

Context and Characteristics

The Gateway Spine

The Gateway Spine runs from west to east, starting at the junction of the Science Bridge with the A4130, running along Station Road, Hitchcock Way to Jubilee Way Roundabout, Marsh Bridge Roundabout, along Hadden Hill, including Tesco Roundabout, ending at the junction of Hadden Hill with NPR3.

According to the DGTDP, this route should change to better accommodate cycling and new methods of transport, and include an arrival space at the station for all modes. Connectivity will be improved by the delivery of the Science Bridge and completion of the NPR3. In the DGTDP, the Gateway Spine section forming part of this project is divided into four character areas which are briefly described below:

- A4130 section east from Science Bridge to the existing A4130 Northern Perimeter Road to B4493 Station Road and Foxhall Road Roundabout.
- B4493 and Station Road to Station Gateway – single carriageway route within a broad corridor with off-road pedestrian and cycle facilities. The Plan indicates that dedicated public transport routes could potentially be accommodated within the corridor.
- Station Gateway – area immediately outside and in the vicinity of Didcot Parkway Station forecourt. The station forecourt has been improved in recent years to improve facilities for people walking, cycling, wheeling and using public transport. However, further work is needed to build on these improvements, as well as enhancing Didcot Station as a gateway to welcome people to Didcot.

- Station Gateway to Hadden Hill Roundabout - single carriageway route, within a broad corridor, with off-road pedestrian and cycle facilities which ends at Jubilee Way Roundabout. It provides access to town centre parking as well as being a through route. There are opportunities for greater pedestrian priority, placemaking and wayfinding interventions as well as opportunities to examine the function of Cow Lane as proposed through Active Travel Fund Tranche-1. The DGTDP shows the Gateway Spine ending at Jubilee Way Roundabout. However, this project will extend the scope to also include Marsh Bridge and Hadden Hill Roundabouts and extend the Gateway Spine to where NPR3 ties into Hadden Hill. These Roundabouts are located close to one another and therefore are interlinked in terms of transport impacts and potential infrastructure improvements.

The Cultural Spine

This route follows the B4493 from the Harwell Link Road Roundabout east of the A34 along Didcot Road, Wantage Road and Broadway to Jubilee Way Roundabout. The DGTDP describes two-character areas for this route:

- Harwell Link Road to Broadway (Foxhall Road) – is a typical suburban route with a single carriageway, verges and mixed provision for traffic modes. There is potential, along this corridor, to improve cycle infrastructure in particular, as it is a key link between the Railway Station and Harwell Campus. There has recently been the installation of hybrid cycle lanes (sometimes called stepped cycle tracks) on either side of the B4493 Wantage Road, which forms part of the Science Vale Cycle Network (SVCN) Route 5 Didcot to Harwell.
- Foxhall Road to Jubilee Way Roundabout – is Didcot's main shopping street and civic / cultural centre. The opportunity exists to transform this area, with the rest of the town centre, into an attractive local destination.

Foxhall Road (B4493)

Foxhall Road (B4493) is a connector road between the Gateway Spine and the Cultural Spine. The road comprises a mixture of residential and commercial land/properties as well as Vauxhall Barracks and access to local schools. Foxhall Road forms a key part of the wider network which should be considered holistically as part of the Project along with the Gateway Spine, Cultural Spine and The Triangle.

The Town Centre - including Haydon Road, Lydalls Road, Station Road, Jubilee Way and the Orchard Centre

The scope of the Project area also includes a triangle shaped piece of land within the three roads discussed ("The Triangle"). This consists of quieter residential roads which may have the potential for higher levels of walking, cycling and wheeling, for example, Haydon Road, Lydalls Road and Station Road. These roads also lend themselves to lower speeds as they are generally narrow with priority junctions and bends. The Triangle also includes the Orchard Centre shopping area, the Cornerstone Arts Centre, cinema, cafes, and restaurants.

Jubilee Way Roundabout at the eastern apex requires particular attention as it suffers from congestion at peak times. A study was carried out in 2012 to investigate options to improve the roundabout, however, due to a lack of funding at that time it was not possible to carry out any works. Since the investigations in 2012, an Aldi supermarket has been built next to the Roundabout, which now limits the space to modify the junction.

This project should be treated holistically and the work at Jubilee Way Roundabout should not be designed in isolation from the rest of the Didcot Central Corridor and should not come forward until the rest of the project planning (including NPR3), is completed. There is a strong local desire to advance the Jubilee Way Roundabout scheme to address existing vehicular capacity issues at this junction.

Land Use and Destinations

Commercial & Retail

Much of the commercial and retail activity is focused to the centre of Broadway at the Station Road junction and the Orchard Centre to its east. The majority of pedestrian retail activity is found within the Orchard Centre, which attracts many visitors from nearby towns to its wider selection of branch stores. This private development however has its back against Broadway High street and reduces any opportunity for users to explore what the wider town has to provide, disadvantaging individual businesses found along Broadway.

Further west of the Cultural Spine are pockets of local retail within the more suburban parts, and includes takeaways, a petrol station, cycle store and an express supermarket.

Industrial business parks operate to the north of the railway line, to the west of Ladygrove estate and west of the power station, including various trading businesses and out-of-centre offices.



Residential

The most predominant land use area within the town is low-rise residential, making up the entire western area of the central corridor town centre triangle and most of the surrounding suburbs up to the town's outer border. This is most notable at the Railway Station arrival, where most buildings seen when leaving the railway station are residential properties facing onto the station. This creates a disconnect between the station and town centre. All key pedestrian routes to the town centre, including the main route along Station Road, are fronted by residential properties, limiting opportunities for the development of communal space along these routes.

Recent developments such as at Great Western Park, combined with planned upcoming developments will further expand the predominance of residential land use in the future.

Industrial

The main industrial area in Didcot is located to the north-west of the railway line at Milton Road, this includes Didcot B Power Station.



Arts/Culture

These facilities are mainly focused in the town centre to the middle of Broadway and on Station Road; including the Cornerstone Arts Centre which hosts various community events and the cinema.

Education & Recreation

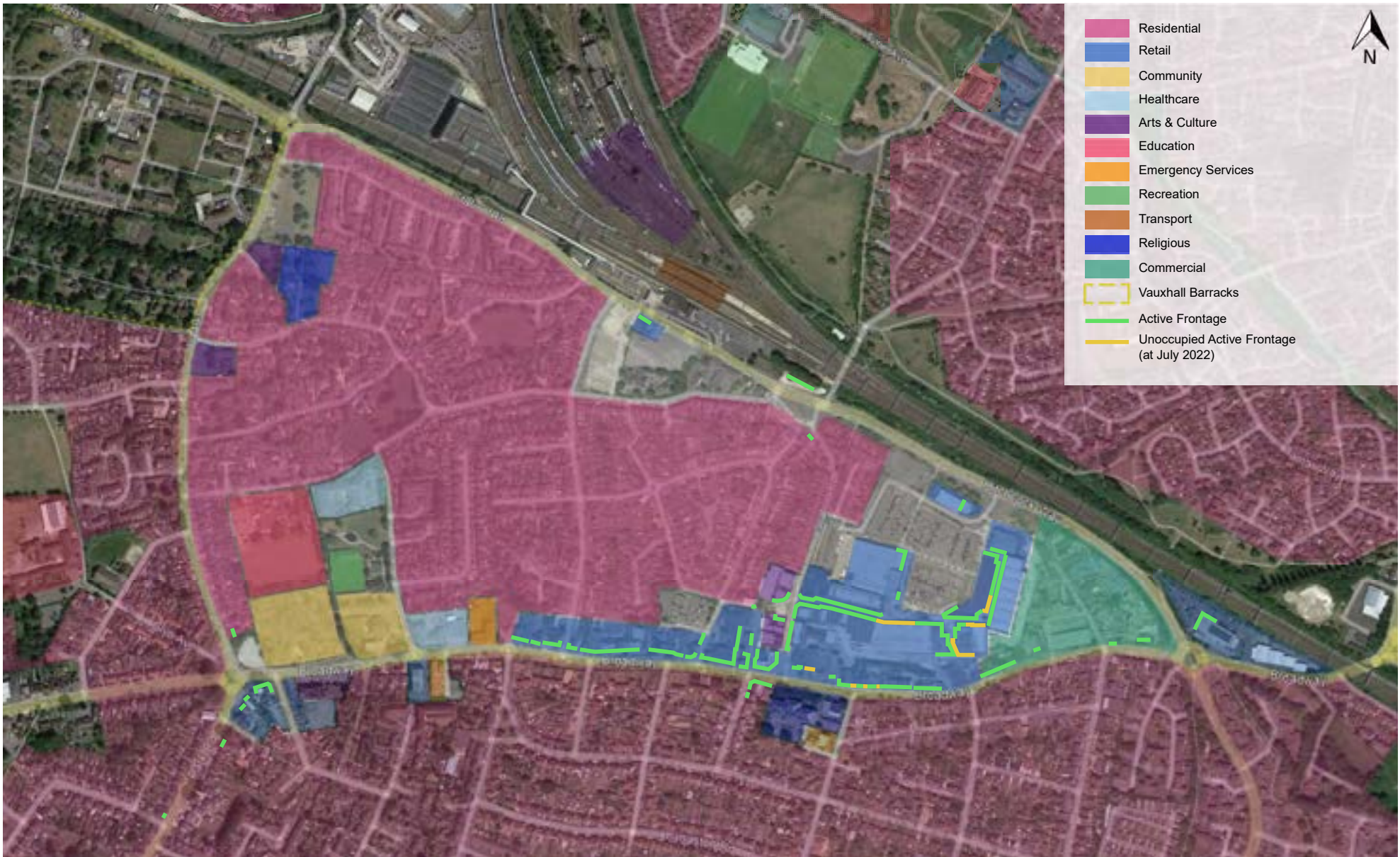
There are various schools and recreational facilities located within the wider residential areas, mainly focused within the north (Ladygrove Park Primary School, Ladygrove Day Nursery, All Saints C of E Primary School), south-east (Willowcroft Community School, Didcot Sixth Form, St Birinus School) and west (Didcot Girls' School, Manor Primary School, Ladybird Pre-School) suburbs. Recreational facilities in these areas include the Didcot Leisure Centre and Didcot Wave to the south, Willowbrook Leisure centre to the north and the Didcot Cricket Club to the west. Within the Central Corridor triangle is Manor Primary School and the Didcot Bowls Club located at Smallbone Recreational Park. Another facility on the west end of Broadway is the Marlborough Club building, which often hosts social community activities and events.

Civic / Community

Civic and community buildings include the Didcot Civic Hall and Didcot Library to the west end of Broadway towards the south end of Foxhall Road. This area appears disconnected from the rest of the town centre because of the distance from the main town centre activity and the surrounding residential character.



Land Use and Destinations



Base map: Google Earth

Planning Policy Context

Various studies and policy documents relevant to the Project have informed this strategy. These include:

The Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (2017)

Didcot was awarded garden town status in 2015. The Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan was devised to identify the vision, masterplan and opportunities to recreate Didcot as a Garden Town. It is not planning policy but forms a backdrop to current and emerging development proposals for the town and wider area. This plan is a key document which sets out the vision for Didcot.

(<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/business/support-business/supporting-our-town-centres/didcot/didcot-garden-town-0>)

The Garden Line

The DGTDP also contains information on the aspirational Garden Line. Linking Culham Science Centre with Didcot station and Harwell Campus, the Garden Line will be a safe cycle and pedestrian route. If secured, the line would be adaptable, accommodating other modes of transport such as driverless pods as these become available. Only part of The Garden Line within the town centre forms part of this scope.

Jubilee Way Traffic Modelling and Scheme Options (2012)

A report was produced for Oxfordshire County Council by Halcrow to model and assess options for improving capacity at Jubilee Way Roundabout.



Map: Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (2017)

Planning Policy Context

South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2035 (adopted 2020)

The Plan sets out the Vision for 2035 as “South Oxfordshire will remain a beautiful and prosperous place to live. It will be an attractive place for people to work and spend their leisure time”.

Spatial policy strategies relevant to this study include:

- Policy STRAT1: the overall strategy for development to provide homes, jobs and services with improved transport connectivity.
- Policy STRAT3: Didcot Garden Town as the focus of sustainable major new development for Science Vale.

- Policy H2: Didcot will provide 6,399 new homes over the Plan period.
- Policy EMP1: facilitate a minimum of 39.1 ha of employment land, including at Southmead Industrial Estate and Milton Park.
- Policy TRANS1b: Supporting Strategic Transport Investment - i) deliver the transport infrastructure which improves movement in and around Didcot, including measures that help support delivery of the Didcot Garden Town.

The Local Plan supersedes the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) which set out the vision for South Oxfordshire to 2027.

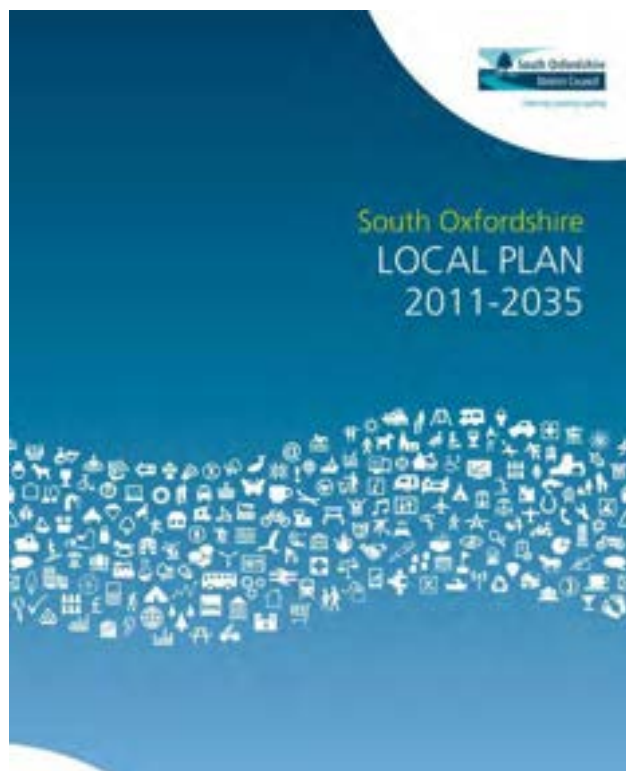
<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/02/SODC-LP2035-Publication-Feb-2021.pdf>

Oxfordshire County Council – Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP 5) 2022 – 2050

Oxfordshire County Council’s long-term vision for transport and travel in the county to 2050. The key challenges identified in LCTP 5 are: decarbonisation, private car dominance, future growth ambitions, connectivity by sustainable modes, connecting rural areas and inclusivity.

Connecting Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP 4)

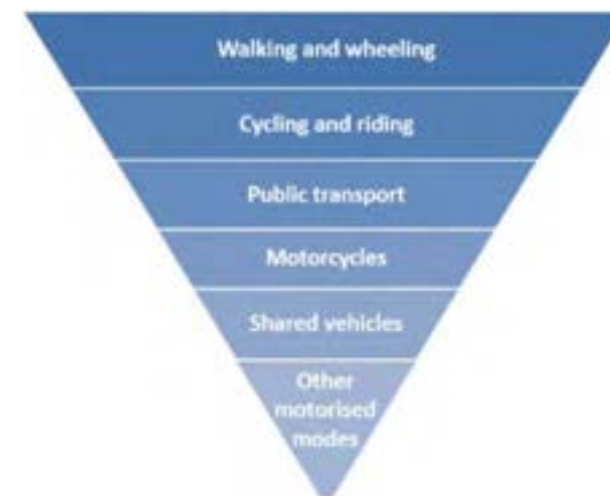
Although now superseded by LTCP 5 (adopted July 2022), the LTCP 5 Area Strategies are yet to be published, hence the Science Vale Area Strategy in LTP 4 remains adopted policy.



South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2020)



South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2020)



Oxfordshire County Council - Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022 - 2050 (July 2022)



The image features a dark blue background with a complex, abstract geometric pattern of thin white lines. These lines form various polygons and shapes, creating a sense of depth and movement. The pattern is centered around the text 'Future Growth'.

Future Growth

Recent and Future Developments

Residential and Commercial Development

There are several residential and commercial development sites in the vicinity of the Central Corridor:



Didcot Gateway Masterplan - November 2021

1. **North West Valley Park:** land is allocated south of A4130 for further residential development for up to 800 units between Valley Park and the existing services / hotel development at Milton Interchange.
2. **Valley Park:** located within the Vale of White Horse District, to the west of Great Western Park. This site is allocated for 2,550 dwellings, with outline permission for over 4,000 dwellings. This includes accompanying schools, sports facilities, local centres and landscaping. New accesses are proposed from A4130 including road infrastructure that enables the provision of the HIF scheme Science Bridge.
3. **Didcot A:** Outline consent has been granted, on land at the former Didcot A Power Station at Purchas Road, for a mixed-use development comprising of up to 400 dwellings, employment, a hotel and leisure uses. The consent includes land reserved for the Science Bridge and a link road.
4. **Great Western Park:** part-way through build-out. This development of 3,300 dwellings straddles the Didcot/Harwell boundary.
5. **Vauxhall Barracks:** Allocated site for 300 dwellings.
6. **Didcot Gateway:** A potential development site located opposite Didcot Parkway Station, in the middle of the Gateway Spine. This project will help to unlock a 300 house development with reduced parking ratios.

SODC and OCC are working with Homes England to create a 'sense of arrival' for visitors to Didcot Garden Town and Science Vale with a scheme of residential and commercial spaces. A key aspect of the Project will be to work with the Didcot Gateway site developers to ensure a cohesive approach to the area.

7. **Orchard Centre Phase 2:** The first phase opened in 2005 and includes a Sainsbury's superstore and High street names such as Argos and Next. The Orchard Centre also has a 5-screen cinema, Cornerstone Arts Centre, a theatre, cafés and restaurants. A £50-million expansion to the Orchard Centre opened in March 2018 with a number of additional retailers and facilities. The new phase is a significant milestone for the future growth of Didcot Garden Town that will bring approximately 15,000 new homes to the region. The newly opened stores are expected to create approximately 500 new jobs, part of the Garden Town plans to create 20,000 new career opportunities over the next two decades.

8. **Ladygrove East:** Allocated site for 642 dwellings.

Proposed Developments in the Wider Vicinity

- **North East Didcot:** Construction has begun, and upon completion will feature 1,800 homes and variety of new community facilities to the north-east of Didcot.
- **Land at Perith Farm (part of NE Didcot site):** 45 dwellings.
- **Hughes Land (part of NE Didcot site):** 120 dwellings.
- **Retained farmland (part of NE Didcot site):** 150 dwellings.
- **Milton Heights:** Allocated in the VoWHDC's Local Plan for 400 homes, subject to masterplanning.
- **Land South of Hadden Hill:** 74 dwellings.
- **Milton Park Local Development Order (LDO).**
- **Harwell Campus Enterprise Zone / LDO.**
- **Land to the East of Lady Grove:** 176 dwellings.



Base map: Google Earth

Recent and Future Developments

Planned Transport Infrastructure schemes

There are four major road and bus route network schemes, with walking and cycling enhancements, that are progressing for DGT, funded by Homes England (HIF1). Construction is expected to start in 2024 with completion in 2026. A fifth significant infrastructure scheme proposal is a link road immediately to the east of Didcot. This is expected to have a similar timeframe to the HIF1 schemes. The schemes are:

1. A4130 Capacity Improvements

A proposed new dual carriageway section on the A4130 between the A34 (Milton Interchange) and the new Science Bridge including new and improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure along its length. The project objectives are to:

- Provide direct access to the A34 and significantly increase road capacity to meet future traffic demand, improve journey times and reliability for bus passengers.
- Support planned growth and economic development and link housing directly to employment sites, including Didcot Garden Town developments.
- Futureproof the road network for the latest ways of travel including autonomous vehicles.

2. Science Bridge

A new road link from the new dualled section of the A4130 crossing the railway line and Milton Road, through the former 'Didcot A Power Station' site, back to the A4130 at Purchas Road Roundabout. The Science Bridge will include pedestrian and cycle infrastructure along its length. The project objectives are to:

- Add capacity to the transport network to aid delivery of housing in the centre and at North East Didcot.
- Encourage use of the A4130 distributor road rather than through traffic travelling through Didcot town centre.
- Deliver new high-quality cycle and pedestrian infrastructure, making it more attractive for people to walk and cycle.
- Aid regeneration at Didcot A site (former PowerStation).
- Support employment growth at Milton Park and the Enterprise Zones and the continued success of these important employment sites.

3. Culham to Didcot River Crossing

A new road crossing the River Thames between Culham and Didcot to include pedestrian and cycle infrastructure along its length. There is already severe congestion at the two pre-existing historic bridges in the area. The new road section and the river crossing will:

- Help deliver planned growth and economic development.
- Create additional capacity for offering an alternative route to the A34, between Oxford and Didcot.
- Create strong linkages between Didcot and employment sites located at Culham Science Centre, Milton Park and Harwell Campus.
- Introduce high quality pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.

4. Clifton Hampden Bypass

A new road stretching between the A415 at Culham Science Centre and the B4015, including pedestrian and cycle infrastructure along its length. The objectives are to:

- Reduce traffic routing through the village, easing congestion and improving access across the area.
- Help deliver planned growth and economic development.
- Introduce high quality pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.

5. Didcot Northern Perimeter Road (NPR3)

The NPR3 is at the preliminary design stage. This scheme will extend the existing A4130 Didcot Northern Perimeter Road (NPR) linking the A4130, Abingdon Road and B4016 junction to the A4130 and Hadden Hill junction. It is part of the Science Vale Transport Strategy and has been identified as a piece of **strategic infrastructure**.

The objectives of NPR3 are to:

- Mitigate the impact of planned growth in Didcot.
- Complete the main route for through traffic, taking it away from Didcot's Central Corridors and the town centre corridor
- Enable space for sustainable and active travel schemes along with a Placemaking Strategy for Didcot Central



Base map: Google Earth





Character Areas

Character Areas | Introduction

The character of the central corridor can be subdivided into five key character areas along with the two outer spines:

- The Orchard Centre
- Station Gateway and Approaches
- Broadway
- Communal District
- Residential
- Gateway and Cultural Spines



Character Area | The Orchard Centre

Base map: Google Earth

The Orchard Centre is a private shopping centre development facing onto Hitchcock Way. This area consists of a recently constructed shopping street linking to the south end of Station Road at the Cornerstone Arts Centre, opening up into a large open stepped amphitheatre area overlooking a large car park. Most pedestrian activity in the town during the day is focused in the shopping centre areas.

Large areas of ornamental planting can be found but varies in quality and maintenance. The amphitheatre area proves to be a popular spot for sitting and socialising, offering seating amongst seasonal flowering perennials and evergreen shrubs. The car park however dominates the area with vast areas of tarmac and areas of bare, unmanaged planting beds.

The development takes up a large portion of the town centre and provides most of the retail activity in the town but is self-contained and doesn't relate to the wider town centre. This in turn results in an area with a lack of identity and sense of place, which obstructs the potential for activity in the wider town centre.



STRENGTHS:

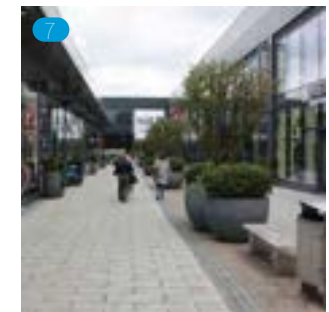
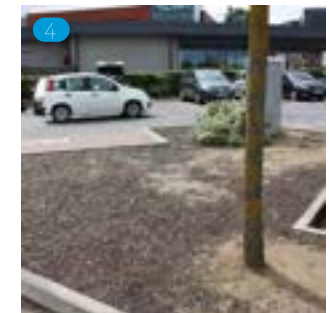
- Cohesive material & furniture palette
- Large amount of street planting
- Spacious pedestrian areas
- Lots of retail/hospitality opportunities

WEAKNESSES:

- General maintenance of surfacing and planting seems low
- Lack of flexibility
- Lack of pedestrian connection into The Orchard Centre with public realm dominated by parking

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Green & blue infrastructure
- Enhance sense of place with connections to other character areas



Character Area | Broadway

Base map: Google Earth

Broadway is the main retail High street of the town. The east end of Broadway is more industrial in nature, catering for adjacent engineering and car construction services fronted with galvanised steel fencing and narrow pedestrian footways. Pedestrian areas are dominated by roadside parking mainly associated with retail and takeaway. The south side of the road is made up of residential terraces which front right up against the narrow pedestrian footpaths.

The centre of Broadway is more retail in nature with a widened pedestrianised area on the north side of the road to Station Road, with some tree canopy cover and active catering frontages. Shops in this area are characterised by 2-3 storey units which extend west along the north side of the road. The south side in contrast is narrow with denser vegetation to the frontage of the Baptist Union premises.

The west end of Broadway, similar to the east end, becomes more residential. The north side of the road continues the 2-3 storey retail units from the centre but with narrowed footways, containing various styles of street furniture which create excessive clutter. The south side in contrast has wide vegetated borders between the road and residential properties, with small pockets of seating areas for resting. Whilst this end of the High street is more vegetated the overall character is more like a suburban shopping street rather than a town high street.

STRENGTHS:

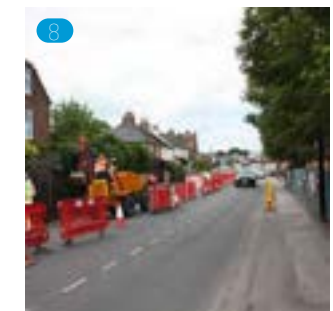
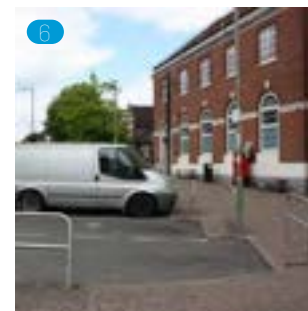
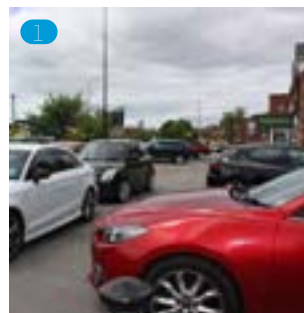
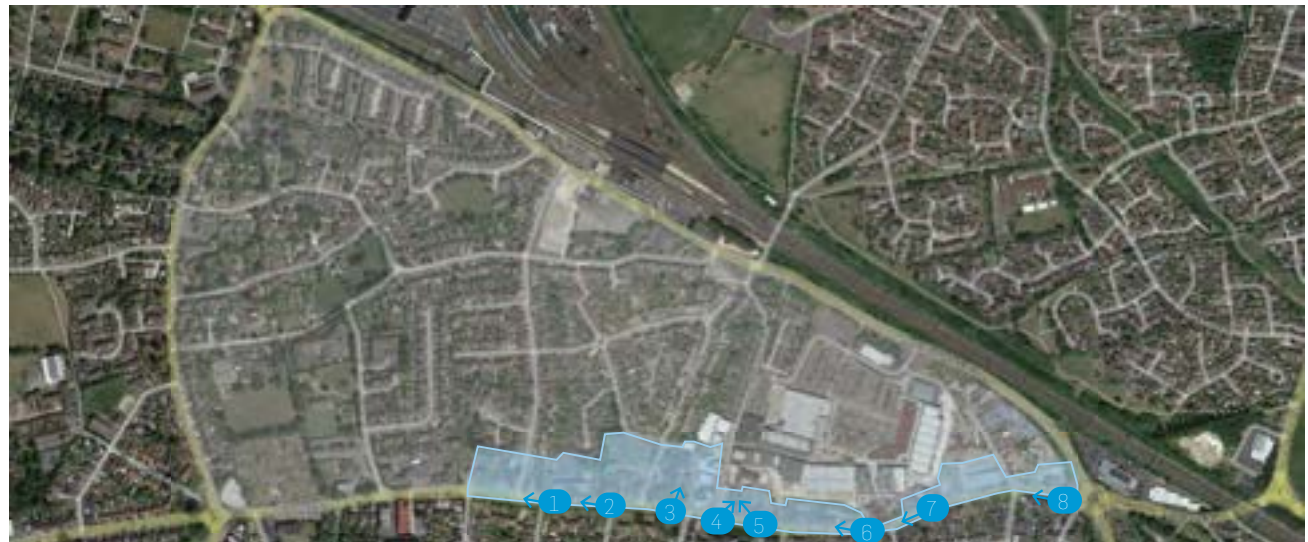
- In some areas; wide pedestrian areas with greenery
- Large amount of stopping points
- Mature tree specimens

WEAKNESSES:

- Parking dominated public realm
- Lack of streetscape consistency

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Improved sense of arrival and connection with other areas
- Consistent palette to create a sense of place
- Green and blue infrastructure



Character Area | Residential

Base map: Google Earth

The largest of the five character areas, mostly made up of two-storey suburban residential properties focused to the south of Broadway and west side of the town centre triangle, converging at the Railway Station area. Various schools, playparks and communal activity facilities are dotted throughout.

Many areas to the west around Foxhall Road, have significant amounts of roadside greenery with a strong sense of character, most notably within the Old Didcot Conservation area.

In contrast, many streets closer to the town centre contain little to no vegetation and are dominated by roadside parking. Minimal vegetation, combined with frequent traffic, creates an uncomfortable experience with a heightened sense of unsafety along school routes.



STRENGTHS:

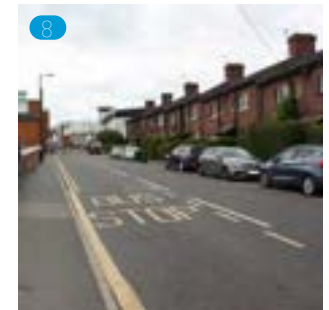
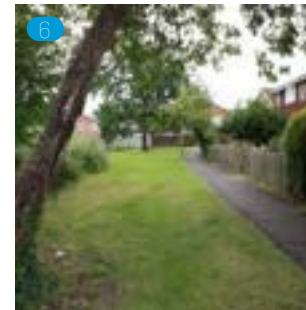
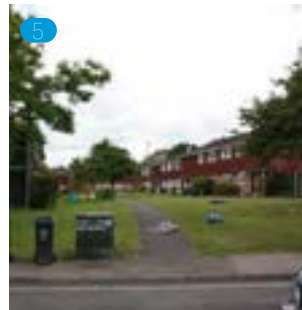
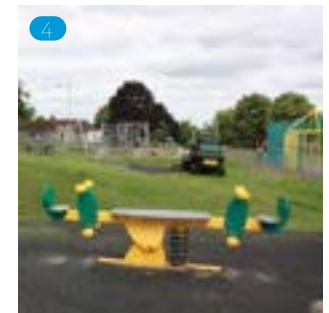
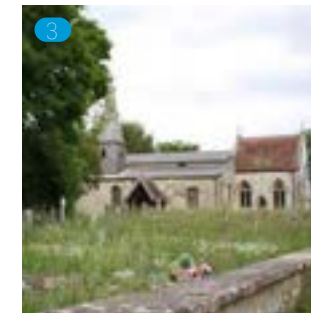
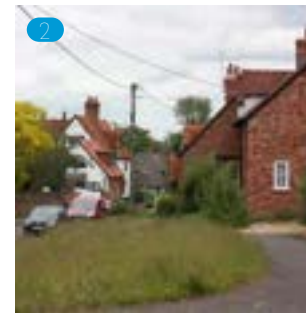
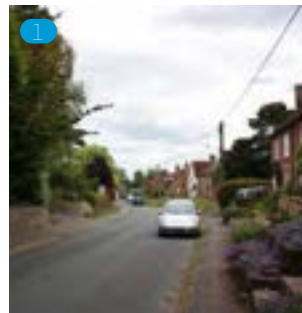
- Significant amount of roadside green verges
- Green squares within residential clusters
- High sense of character with similar uses of architectural styles and materials
- Play spaces

WEAKNESSES:

- Roadside parking and parking onto roadside green verges
- Traffic dominance with no separation / delineation between the road and footway

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Improved public and active travel network
- Green and blue infrastructure



Character Area | Station Approach

Base map: Google Earth

This area consists of the Railway Station arrival and connecting Gateway Spine: the B4493 to the west and Station Road / Hitchcock Way to the east.

The west side is heavily dominated by traffic along the Gateway Spine, with narrow pedestrian footpaths and roadside barriers. Wide verges and mature tree cover provide some buffer between footway/cycleways and the road to the north side but lack accessibility from the residential areas due to few road crossings. Views are dominated by unsightly surrounding industries and the extensive footbridge leading from the station to the Foxhall Multi-storey car park.

The centre of the area around the Railway Station is many people's first impression of Didcot arriving by train, however it is dominated by traffic running through the centre and adjacent car parking areas. This creates an underwhelming arrival and welcome into the town, with a low sense of activity and place.

To the east of the Railway Station the road is fronted by derelict areas and abandoned buildings beside the Railway Station, with heavy traffic presence and few pedestrian comforts. Vegetation alongside the railway provides some softening to the wide, industrialised streetscape, but is dwarfed by vast areas of asphalt paving. There is some provision for cyclists and pedestrians in the form of a footpath and cycle path separated from the road, leading from Jubilee Way roundabout with a buffer between the lane and roadside for a safer and more comfortable user experience.

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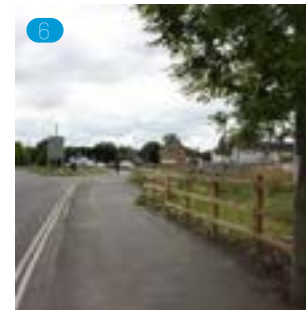
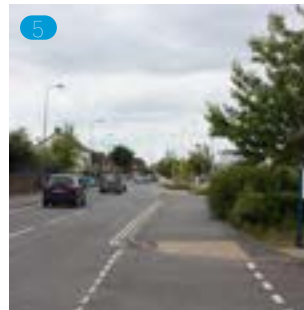
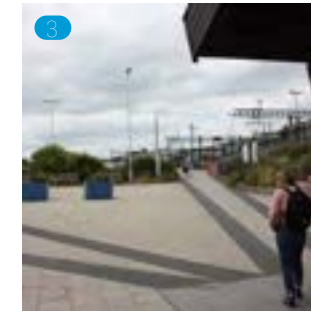
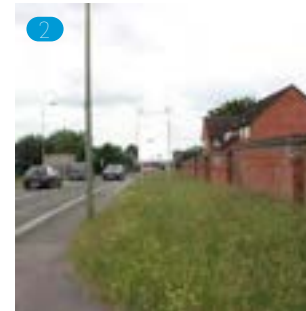
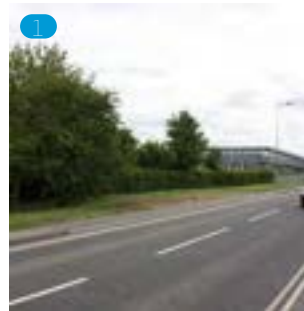
- Strong linear habitats along railway line

WEAKNESSES:

- Heavy traffic, high speed road
- In some areas; narrow pavements adjacent to roadside
- Lack of arrival at station caused by pedestrian severance
- Large amount of unused space and brownfield sites

OPPORTUNITIES:

- A sense of arrival and place
- Improved public and active travel network
- Green and blue infrastructure



Character Area | Communal District

Base map: Google Earth

This is an area of communal buildings to the west end of Broadway High street, also including the Ministry of Defence land to the north end of Foxhall Road.

The area is characterised by larger scale buildings of various architectural styles, centred around the Didcot Civic Hall building with some significant areas of planting around the vicinity. Other buildings include Didcot Library and Didcot Health Centre. The area feels disconnected from the rest of the town centre activity area due to the surrounding prominence of residential properties and lack of pedestrian connectivity.



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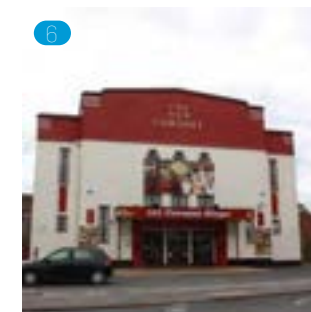
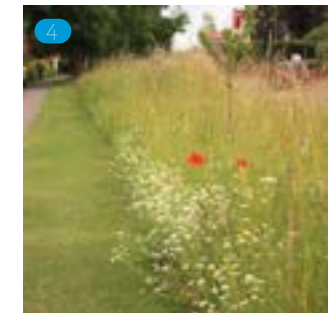
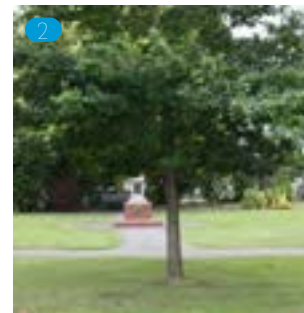
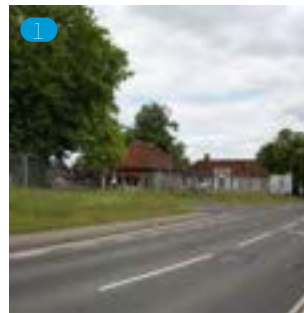
- Formal style parks
- Wildflower planting along roadside verges creates pedestrian-vehicle buffer and biodiversity opportunities
- Mature tree specimens

WEAKNESSES:

- Roadside parking outside buildings
- Diverse architectural styles, materials and furniture creates confusing identity
- Heavy traffic road with intermixed land uses

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Improved public and active travel and public transport networks
- Green and blue infrastructure



Character Area | Outer Gateway & Cultural Spines

Base map: Google Earth

Both the Gateway and Cultural spines enter the town centre triangle from the west, linking with the A34 road which runs to Oxford in the north and Newbury in the south. The adjoining areas to the west of the town consist mostly of residential suburbs, much of which are new build developments with some commercial services.

Whilst the Gateway spine is more narrow and heavily vegetated with roadside trees and scrub, compared to the more wide and open landscape with mown grass verges to the cultural spine, both are heavily car-dominated.

Other than a segregated footpath and cycle lane to a small portion of Didcot Road on the cultural spine there is minimal good quality infrastructure for active travel servicing these suburbs. Footpaths feel narrow and heavily exposed to fast passing traffic.

With the exception of a welcome to Didcot sign to the Gateway spine on the A4130 there is no gateway feature indicating entry into the town, meaning no sense of arrival or sense of place and instead presenting a character of a through-route for traffic.

The expanding residential population in this area brings with it opportunities for localised services and new improved future-proof infrastructure focused on encouraging active and public travel modes to cope with the increase in population.

STRENGTHS:

- Formal, mature tree specimens
- Wide areas of vegetation

WEAKNESSES:

- Roads with intermixed land uses
- Footways exposed to heavy traffic with little comfort
- Minimal cycling infrastructure

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Improved public infrastructure
- Enhanced vegetation verges
- Welcoming gateway features for increased sense of place



Images: google maps

Study Area Summary | Site Analysis

STRENGTHS

Existing development plans and investment, such as:

- Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan
- Enterprise zones: Science campuses such as Milton Park, Harwell Science and Innovation Centre, Culham Science Centre, The Didcot Growth Accelerator.

Regionally strong public transport links to key cities including:

- London, Oxford, Reading, Bristol, Birmingham
- Frequent local bus services with support to further expand.

A large commercial catchment area, attracting visitors from nearby towns such as:

- Abingdon
- Wallingford

Strong heritage:

- Didcot Railway Centre
- Listed buildings / monuments e.g. All Saints' Youth & Community Hall.

Existing green infrastructure, such as:

- Community parks: Great Western Drive Park, Smallbone Recreation Park, Ladygrove Loop
- Mature tree specimens along Broadway and Hitchcock Way
- Significant areas of greenery to the western end of Broadway and town centre road entry gateways/roundabouts e.g. Station Road and Foxhall Road, Broadway and Foxhall Road, Hitchcock Way and Broadway.

WEAKNESSES

Lack of pedestrian and cycling connectivity, sense of arrival and sense of place:

- Unclear link between the station arrival and town centre / Broadway
- Traffic dominated routes e.g. Hitchcock Way/Station Road
- Lack of wayfinding
- Lack of outdoor space for social gathering for people of all ages and diverse groups
- Visual and physical segregation between key areas of the town centre e.g. Orchard Centre, Broadway, Railway Station, Cornerstone Arts Centre area
- Intermixed land uses e.g. residential and commercial, lack of definition to the town centre and identity

- Lack of streetscape consistency e.g. mismatch of street furniture, materiality

- Division caused by railway line, lack of pedestrian links between the north and south sides.

Lack of infrastructure for active travel:

- Unclear and fragmented cycle routes with little or no separation from the road.

Car-dominated public realm:

- Large areas dedicated to car parks, most notably to the Railway Station arrival and Orchard Centre
- On-street parking along Broadway
- Heavy traffic to Broadway and Station Road/ Hitchcock Way
- Narrowing of Broadway to the west end, combined with on street parking, significantly reduces pedestrian permeability of the public realm.

Mismatch of low-quality street materials and furniture:

- Lack of consistent high quality paving materials to Broadway and Station link, lacking pedestrian priority and sense of place
- Inconsistent street furniture e.g. mixture of bins, bollards, bike stands: increasing sense of disconnection between key areas of the town centre e.g. station, Orchard Centre, Broadway.

Low quality architecture and public image:

- Along Broadway, most notably to the east end
- Dated street furniture and paving materials.

Street clutter:

- Bollards and vehicle barriers to streetside parking areas along Broadway
- Scattered signage and cycle stands along Broadway and Station Road Junction area.

Maintenance issues:

- Damaged/broken street furniture elements throughout
- Degrading paving materials, most notably to the far east and west ends of Broadway
- Lack of tree/vegetation maintenance: warping of tree grilles, low tree canopies, bare patches in raised tree planting areas to the west end of Broadway.

OPPORTUNITIES

Enhanced sense of Place and Identity:

- Links between the station, Broadway, Cornerstone Arts Centre and the Orchard Centre, culminating in a central town square
- Reinvigorate the streetscape: High quality public realm and enhanced facades, reduced traffic speed and parking dominance to Broadway. Attract investment and development to Broadway. Extension/maximising of the public realm for pedestrian priority and commercial opportunities along Broadway e.g. markets.

Enhanced green and blue infrastructure:

- Network of street trees along key pedestrian and cycle routes, connecting with existing and new communal green spaces
- Potential development of new community green spaces in vacant sites e.g. north of Station Road, east end of Broadway, areas on the south side of the west end of Broadway.

Potential for Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) in the form of roadside bioswales and raingardens. Example: Grey to Green, Sheffield.

Enhanced links and sense of arrival:

- Improved streetscape along Station Road between the station and Broadway, with high quality paving, wayfinding and consistent furniture. Example: The Gold Route, Sheffield
- Improved link and relationship between town centre areas e.g. between Broadway, Orchard Centre and Cornerstone Arts Centre. Incorporating consistent street furniture and wayfinding.
- Enhanced gateways e.g. the station, railway underpasses to Ladygrove, roundabouts at Station Road and Foxhall Rd, Broadway and Foxhall Road, Hitchcock Way and Broadway.

Improved active travel and public transport network:

- More coherent, direct, safe and comfortable pedestrian network with enhanced safety and separation from road traffic
- Increased provision for cycle parking throughout the town
- Improved connectivity to town centre by public transport
- Improved quality bus network infrastructure
- Completion of NPR3 to divert through-traffic from Didcot centre with the opportunity to provide space for active travel and road schemes.

THREATS

- Pushback and restrictions on land ownership
- Negative public perception.





Key Challenges & Opportunities

Challenges & Opportunities | Introduction

This section describes the key challenges and opportunities identified for the Central Corridor.

Feedback from stakeholder engagement has been used to identify key themes, concerns and opportunities. Further research and site audits have been undertaken to supplement the findings, provide more detail on the topics raised and identify any further areas for consideration.

The findings from stakeholder engagement are summarised below, with challenges and opportunities discussed in more detail in the following pages.

Stakeholder Engagement

Given that Didcot has been subject to extensive consultation in recent years, this Placemaking Strategy has sought to build upon the findings of previous relevant engagements.

The Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (DGTDP) was subject to extensive community and stakeholder engagement between November 2016 and July 2017.

This engagement sought to collect comments and views on the emerging DGTDP from a wide range of interested parties using multiple platforms including: a dedicated website, public drop in sessions, pop-up shows, Facebook and newspaper advertising, display stands, leaflet delivery, posters, press releases and targeted meetings.

Engagement feedback collected as part of the DGTDP has been revisited and reviewed for this 2022 strategy to identify common themes raised by participants.

The outcome of the stakeholder engagement exercise identified three key focus themes for Didcot:

- Place and Space
- Connectivity and Wayfinding
- Transport Infrastructure.

Other relevant topics that were raised in the DGTDP engagement included:

- Funding and maintenance
- Lack of engagement with younger people.

As part of the development of this Placemaking Strategy, further engagement was undertaken in July 2022 to:

- Ratify the three themes, concerns and opportunities identified from review of the DGTDP engagement results
- Understand any concerns or opportunities relating to younger people
- Gather any opinions which may have changed in the following years.

Stakeholder participants included key local representatives from the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board and steering groups, South and Vale Local Members and Officers, Oxfordshire County Council, HarBUG and local youth group representatives.

Comments provided by participants typically ratified the findings of the DGTDP consultation review, with some additional information being raised.

Changes in opinions since the DGTDP consultation that were raised included:

- Demographics have shifted in the town since the previous Census – more younger adults and diversification of ethnicity. This should be celebrated
- There is a need for night-time economy and café culture
- There are more delivery vehicles due to the rise in online shopping. There is a lack of consolidation facilities
- There is a lack of provision for electric bikes.

These changes have been considered as part of the review of challenges and opportunities.

Investigation of Didcot's Challenges and Opportunities

The remainder of this section and the Placemaking Strategy section which follows are structured around the three key focus themes.

Summaries of what was raised under each key theme are outlined next, with further detail including the findings of further research and site audits provided on the following pages.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

Place and Space

'Infrastructure that helps to give residents and visitors a sense of place, gives the town an identity, facilitates healthy lifestyles and supports carbon net zero.'

DGTDP Key Themes

- More green spaces needed
- Greenery and planting
- Issues regarding perception and branding of the town
- Support for a potential town square.

2022 Engagement Update

- Branding and a welcome are lacking. Didcot is a town of the future, Branding should build on science and technology.
- Didcot lacks a central focus point
- There is a need for places for people to stop and sit, areas for meeting and socialising, tables and chairs
- There are a lack of sheltered spaces for younger people, that they can feel is 'theirs'
- Space may exist, but it's grey and should be green
- Planting needs to be futureproofed
- There is overgrown vegetation which can affect visibility.

What this means for the Vision:

A public realm that draws upon heritage & conservation as well as the emerging science and technology identity of the area. It seeks to extend and plant more green infrastructure in the town to improve the environment whilst providing an attractive backdrop to everyday living; creating social spaces that support inter-generational interaction a greater a sense of community.



Connectivity and Wayfinding

'Connection by active travel between key destinations and public transport hubs / station and stops.'

DGTDP Key Themes

- Rail line severs the town
- Better footways and footpaths needed
- Cycling currently unconnected and unsafe
- Maintenance
- Attractive welcome needed.

2022 Engagement Update

- There is a need for more strategies to make the town centre more attractive to cyclists
- Some users of painted cycle lanes feel unsafe due to vehicle encroachment (moving and parked)
- The existing underpasses need to feel safe and light. Users are put off at night
- Public Art and Cultural strategies would link well with entrance features and attractive wayfinding, opportunities for local people to feel a sense of ownership and introduce a sense of play to the public realm
- There is a lack of wayfinding / photo signage from key areas such as the Station.

What this means for the Vision:

To provide attractive, welcome and useful wayfinding for the active travel modes of pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists. This focuses on travel from transport hubs/station and stops and the wider area to the town centre.*

**wheelers – typically including scooters, e-scooters and mobility scooters*



Transport Infrastructure

'Address problems at traffic pinchpoints where there is constraint in accommodating travel demand.'

DGTDP Key Themes

- Traffic pinch points
- Frontage of Broadway
- Reopening of Station Road
- Closure of Cow Lane to motor vehicles
- Parking (suitable locations and residential parking)
- Improved access to A34.

2022 Engagement Update

- Traffic pinch points include Jubilee Way Roundabout, and Sainsburys car park access [Orchard Centre]
- NPR3 and the HIF1 schemes should reduce the need for vehicles to use Cow Lane, which is a key connection between the town centre and open space
- Parking can interrupt the flow of traffic in places, such as the narrow sections of Broadway. Lorries can encroach on footways when they are unable to pass
- Residents parking scheme(s) may relieve pressure on people who need to drive and park
- There is limited Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure
- Buses are an important element for local transport.

What this means for the Vision:

Upgraded key locations to better accommodate travel by different modes, allowing better access to and from the town by all.



Place and Space | Heritage & Conservation

Railway Heritage

The Great Western Railway, engineered by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, played an important role in Didcot's past. The Railway Station was opened in 1844 and was later linked to Oxford which greatly contributed to the growth and development of the town at this time. Whilst the original station no longer remains, the Didcot Railway Centre Museum, formerly a Great Western Railway engine shed, hosts working steam locomotives and offers short tours and rides to visitor.

Conservation Areas

Despite this strong history, there is minimal presence of this heritage within the town itself. Due to developments throughout the years the town has lost this heritage presence, with the exception of three conservation areas.



Didcot Station Road conservation area

An area of 19th Century residential houses facing onto Station Road between the Railway Station and Broadway, built in the early days of the town's railway development by Great Western Rail to accommodate workers. These were designated as a Conservation Area in 1982 in recognition of their historic interest and in 1992 an Article 4 Direction further protected their historic character.

Didcot Old Conservation Area

An area of Grade II listed cottages, some dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries, located on Foxhall Road between Lydalls Road and Manor Road. Within this area is All Saints' Church, a Grade II* listed building that dates back to the 12th Century. An old Yew tree, designated as an Ancient tree within its grounds. This area was designated as a conservation area in 1979.

Didcot Northbourne Conservation Area

An area of 19th Century terraced housing to the south side of the east end of Broadway. The area was designated as a conservation area in 1982.



Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

There are numerous TPOs within the site area, mostly focused within the residential areas to the west, including the south end of Haydon Road, Orchard Close which contains a Dawn Redwood (endangered species) and Britwell Road to the grounds of the Didcot Arts & Community Association. There are pockets of TPOs within the church grounds of All Saints' Church and elsewhere within Didcot Old Conservation Area.

To the east end of Broadway, within the commercial centre of the town, there is a concentration of TPOs. These are within the grounds of the Baptist Union of Great Britain to the south of Broadway/Station Road Junction, as well as a single TPO Horse Chestnut tree within the market place behind the Cornerstone Arts Centre. Within the Northbourne Conservation Area, are numerous TPOs including Sequoia and yew trees.



Place and Space | Heritage & Conservation

Base map: Google Earth



Place and Space | Green Infrastructure

Wider Context

The south and east outskirts of Didcot are surrounded by the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and contains rare species-rich chalk grassland and chalk streams as well as ancient woodlands, containing many Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The Oxford Green belt runs along the northern outskirts, encompassing the River Thames and various associated marinas and lakes.

Urban Trees and Vegetation

The town centre as a whole lacks open green space and vegetation, however there is a significant corridor of dense woodland and scrub planting which stretches along both sides of the railway tracks. Within the town centre there are small pockets of street trees, including within the hard-paved Broadway and Station Road junction, to the east end of Broadway off Jubilee Way Roundabout, within the Orchard Centre Car Park and Baptist Union of Great Britain frontage.

Mature street trees can also be found to the west end of Broadway outside the commercial premises, as well as some raised planters and wide amenity grass banks to the south side. However much of the ornamental vegetation with the town centre is in poor condition, most notably to the west end of Broadway and the Cornerstone Arts Centre marketplace.

More high-quality planting can be found to the Railway Station entrance and Orchard Centre amphitheatre, with well-maintained seasonal flora and herbaceous grasses. Vegetation within the centre overall is spread out with no continuity or green links between, making streets feel exposed/unsheltered and reducing pedestrian comfort, discouraging pedestrian activity and prolonged use of these streets.



Open Green Communal Space

Much of the open communal spaces in the town are focused to the western residential areas, with no open green spaces within the town centre.

Great Western Park

Great Western Park is located on the A4130 to the west of the town centre, surrounded by recent residential developments. The park contains extensive areas of woodland planting to the roadside with amenity lawn spaces and playground facilities focused to the edges of the residential areas on Heron Lane and Robin Way.

Smallbone Recreation Park

Smallbone Recreation Park is an area of green space north of the Didcot Civic Hall and Didcot Bowls Club facility, containing a flexible amenity lawn area with trees, a playground and areas for seating. Connecting to the park is the grounds of Ladybird Pre-School with private allotments adjoining to the corner of Broadway and Foxhall Road.

Ladygrove Loop Park

A series of connected green open spaces running alongside the north of the railway to the south of Ladygrove residential estate, containing a skatepark, open amenity lawn areas and playground facilities. It is connected to the town centre via two underpasses, Cow Lane and near Jubilee Way roundabout.



Boundary/Neighbourhood Park

Large open spaces making up part of the recently developed residential neighbourhoods on the outer western edge of the town, containing vast amenity lawn space, playground facilities, skate park and sports pitches.

Great Western Drive Park/All Saints' Church

A communal space adjoining the All Saints' Church grounds, containing a playground set within open amenity lawn.

Edmonds Park

To the south residential suburbs, accommodating communal facilities such as the Didcot Wave & Gym and Youth & Community Centre. The centre of the park is open amenity lawn area as well as sport pitches, bordered with mature oak trees.

Loyd Recreation Park

Located to the north west of Didcot Girls' School, with open amenity fields and a large playpark to the north.



Place and Space | Green Infrastructure

Base map: Google Earth



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Gateways

The need for an attractive welcome to Didcot was raised through the Stakholder engagement. We have identified six key Gateways into Didcot, described in the following section.



1. Milton Park Gateway

This gateway links the Milton Park area to the far west with the town centre via the Gateway Spine on the A4130. The area has dense tree cover to the north side with a narrow shared footpath/cyclepath on the south side. With the exception of a small 'Welcome to Didcot' sign there is no clear sense of arrival into the town.



2. North-West town centre Gateway

The roundabout on Station Road, at the northern end of Foxhall Road, is the gateway to the edge of the town centre on the Gateway Spine. It acts as the transitional gateway from the western suburbs and Milton Park into the town centre. National Cycle Network (NCN) route 5, from Basil Hill Road, using the Foxhall Road bridge across the railway (north arm with a weight restriction), joins the narrow shared footpath/cyclepath along A4130. The area is motor vehicle dominated and industrial in nature due to the industrial and business parks north of the railway. Trees, shrubs and mown grass offer some greenery but minimal designed vegetation and no arrival features.



3. Railway Station Arrival

The Railway Station arrival gateway is the first impression many visitors will have of Didcot. The forecourt spillout space to the west side of the exit has seating, planting and provision for cyclists. However, the Railway Station lacks a sense of arrival and place for Didcot. People exiting the station are immediately confronted with the obstructing effect of the bus station, and little indication of direction to the town's centre. The map, in the western space, directs users in the opposite direction to use the only pedestrian crossing to the town centre. There are no other visual clues. Further east is the Cow Lane underpass, an uninviting shared vehicle and pedestrian/cyclist connection between the north and south of the town.



4. Jubilee Way Roundabout

This roundabout at the western end of Hitchcock Way, is the gateway into the town from the east and is notorious for traffic congestion. Although, to and around it, there are shared pedestrian and cycle paths and crossings, motor vehicles take priority and are dominant. Some ornamental planting on the roundabout provides a sense of arrival, but there large areas of unused space and unattractive barriers. An underpass underneath the railway tracks to the west of the roundabout is an uninviting link between the north and south parts of the town.



5. South-West Town Centre Gateway

The roundabout to the southern end of Foxhall Road is the gateway to the town centre on the Cultural Spine from the west onto Broadway. There are significant large specimen trees in this area, including one tree on the roundabout itself. Ground vegetation in Springtime provides swathes of wildflower and grassland with great visual effects and ecological benefits with minimal maintenance. The roundabout is tired looking, similar to the rest of Broadway, motor vehicles dominate. Provision for pedestrians and cyclists is not to a high standard.



6. Didcot Road Gateway

This gateway links the far west end of the Cultural Spine (B4493) with Broadway and town centre via Didcot Road/Wantage Road. The area is characterised by recent and planned residential suburban developments and associated services. Whilst recent developments have provided more infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists there are vast stretches of under-utilised roadside space which could provide opportunity for welcoming gateway features with improvements for walking and cycling.

Connectivity and Wayfinding | Gateways

Base map: Google Earth



Connectivity and Wayfinding | town centre

Railway Station Arrival

Overall pedestrian and cycling connectivity throughout the town lacks direction, with minimal wayfinding and clear, visible routes between key destinations. This lack of connectivity is most noteworthy at the Railway Station arrival, where with the exception of a wayfinding map, there is no clear pedestrian connection to the town centre. Heavy traffic on Station Road, with no pedestrian crossing immediately opposite to the Railway Station exit, heightens this disconnect. The station wayfinding map directs people onto Station Road which requires a walk through the bus station waiting area to the nearest crossing some distance along the road at Cow Lane Junction.

From here, pedestrians are led to the disused car park area with no wayfinding elements, signage or landmarks to guide visitors from this area to the town centre connection at Station Road. Visual connections to this link are obstructed by residential dwellings and the Enterprise Rent-A-Car premises. There are no seating, resting and socialising opportunities along this route.



Station Road (side road, southbound)

The footpath along Station Road is narrow and residential in nature, with no visual clues to distinguish it as the main connecting corridor between the Railway Station and town centre. The edge of the Orchard Centre premises further along provides the first clues of a commercial centre but is dominated with the backs of stores and extensive car parking and no appealing pedestrian link into the development.

To the south, Broadway junction opens up into a more pedestrianised paved area, but with minimal interaction between the facing developments of the Orchard Centre, Cornerstone Arts Centre and Broadway High street. There are few active frontages and opportunities for activities and social interaction with the exception of some sheltered seating to the Cornerstone Arts Centre.

Broadway

The far east end of Broadway is disadvantaged by the traffic-dominated environment inflicted by the Jubilee Way Roundabout. Coupled with narrow footways, dominance of car parking, industrialised environment, and no key destinations in this area there is currently little incentive for visitors to explore this part of the High street.

The centre of Broadway hosts wider areas of public realm with higher quality paving materials, but currently lacks a communal activity focus which the space could provide. There is a sense that the recent Stage 2 development of the Orchard Centre, which runs parallel but faces away from it, doesn't participate with Broadway. The centre has taken on the role of this section of the High street at the communal area for seating, socialising and commercial activity.

The west of Broadway is heavily dominated by car parking. With residential properties extending along the full length of the south side of the road, the area lacks the appearance and character of a town High street. Store frontages on the north side of the road are taken up with parking and associated street clutter. Whilst there are opportunities for resting with benches to store frontages and parklets on the south side, not seen elsewhere on the High street, planting and street furniture are in a state of disrepair, are mismatched and lack cohesion. This is further accentuated in the mixed use of paving materials, ranging from brick setts to areas of cracked in-situ concrete dominated by parked cars.

Didcot North / Ladygrove

The railway, combined with the traffic dominance to Station Road and Hitchcock Way, has resulted in the town being split into two halves. With the exception of road bridges to Jubilee Way in the far east and Foxhall Road to the west, the only options for pedestrians and cyclists to get to the town centre from the north is via two underpasses opening up onto Hitchcock Way from the Ladygrove estate. The first is Cow Lane, shared with vehicular traffic and the other is a pedestrian and cyclist underpass close to Aldi and the Jubilee Way roundabout. With a lack of natural surveillance at these connections, they are deemed by many residents as unsafe and uninviting.



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Walking and Cycling

Walking

Throughout the town centre, there are few resting points, especially within the key link between the Railway Station and Broadway. Combined with few sheltering and shading street trees, car-traffic dominance, degrading paving surface materials and a lack of a sense of destination and direction, this results in a discouraging walking environment for pedestrians.



Cycling

There are various cycling routes around the town, mostly concentrated to the north with extensive off-road cycleways which includes two National Cycle Network (NCN) routes:

- NCN 5 runs through Oxford and Abingdon from the north, linking into Didcot town centre at Foxhall Road bridge, Cow Lane Underpass and Hitchcock Way Underpass.
- NCN544 runs from Cow Lane Underpass along Hitchcock Way, around Jubilee Way Roundabout and south through various villages, terminating in Wantage to the south-west.

The links of these cycle networks to and through the town are uninviting and traffic-dominated, joining onto the segregated but exposed Hitchcock Way cycle track and terminate before linking directly with the Railway Station and cycle network to the west towards Milton Park.

An off-road cycle path runs alongside the A4130 between Milton Park and Foxhall Road, linking to the NCN 5. This cycleway whilst being mostly separated from nearby traffic, has degrading asphalt surfacing with cracking and undulations which discourages use. Vegetation provides a buffer from adjacent traffic, but creates dense areas with minimal natural surveillance with reduced sense of safety. There are unmaintained edges where vegetation encroaches the cycle route.

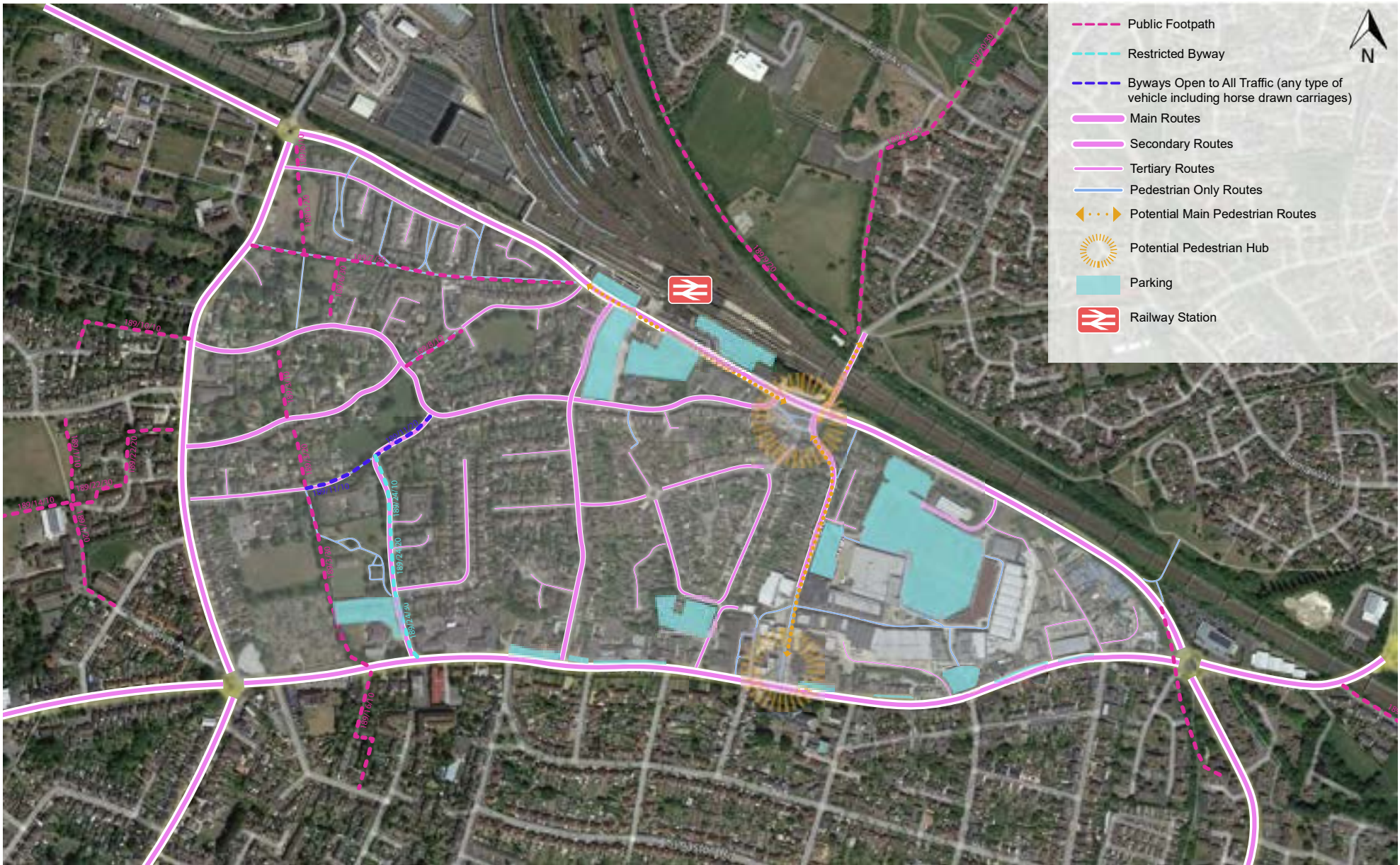
There are minimal to no cycle paths along Broadway and within the town centre. With the exception of some large cycle stand areas to the east side of the Railway Station exit, within the Orchard Centre and the Civic Centre, there are minimal cycle parking facilities throughout the centre.

Along the east side of Broadway, there are occasional small groups of cycle stands, but from the Station Road-Broadway junction westwards leading to the Civic Centre there is no cycle parking provision. This has resulted in other street furniture being used for cycle parking, adding to street clutter and encroaching on pedestrian routes.



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Walking Routes

Base map: Google Earth



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Cycle Routes & Infrastructure

Base map: Google Earth



Transport Infrastructure | Public Transport

Didcot is an important interchange, and a transitory place due to its location within the County and transport links between major cities. However, within the town itself and immediate locality, there is a need for improved local connections between the town centre and station to other parts of the town and its hinterland including neighbouring villages and centres such as Oxford. There is a need for Didcot to become a destination, rather than a transitory area.

Travel by Train

Didcot is well-connected to nearby cities via train, including frequent direct services to:

- London Paddington (40 minutes, 5 per hour)
- Oxford (15 minutes, 2 per hour)
- Reading (11 minutes, 5 per hour)
- Bristol (54 minutes, 2 per hour)

Travel by Bus

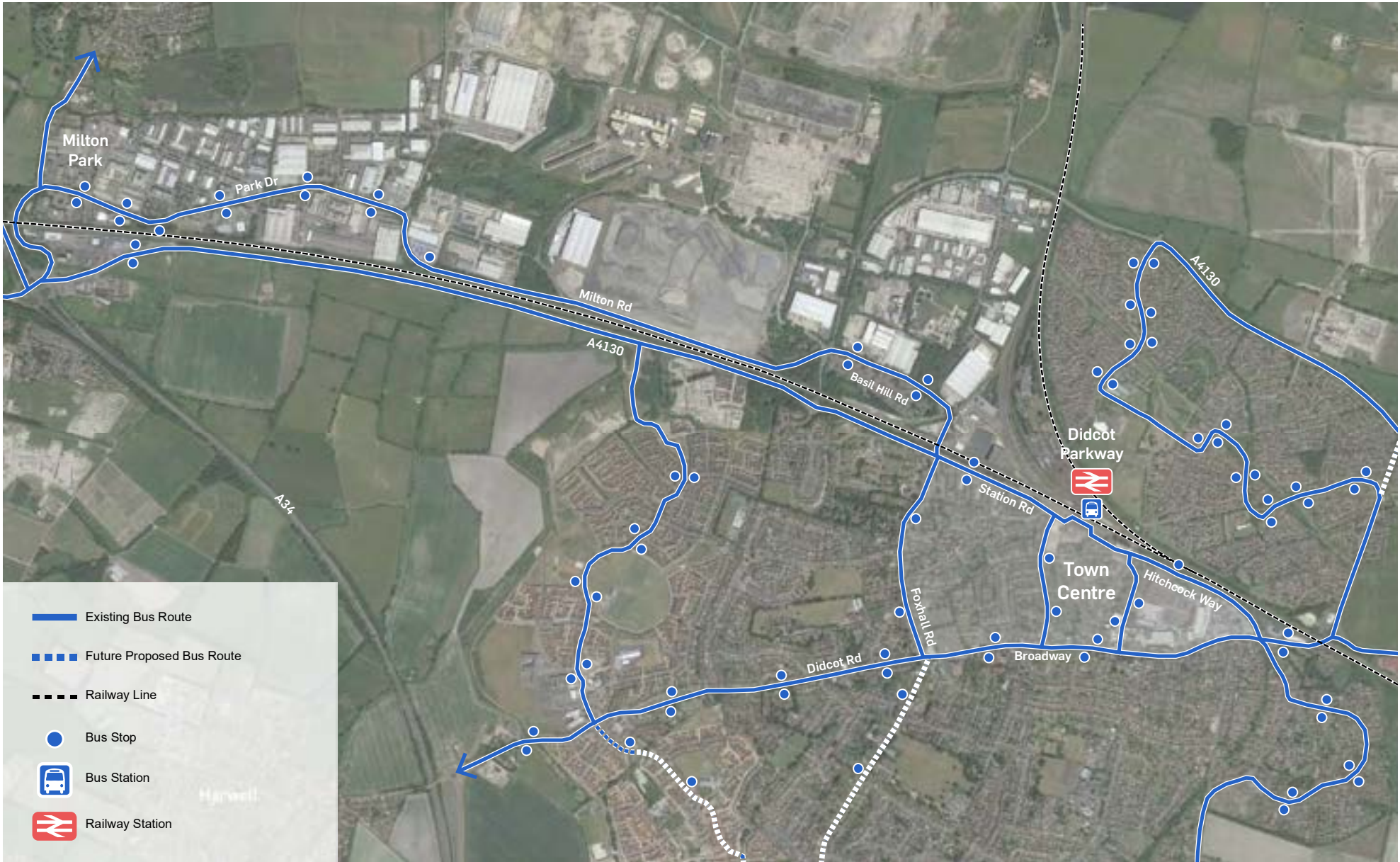
Various bus routes run through Didcot from the bus station outside the Railway Station exit on Station Road. Key routes include:

- 99A/C route, circling the town centre core via Station Road, Hitchcock Way and Foxhall Road, extending along Broadway out to Greenwood Way in the west, connecting to the A4130 and Milton Park Road in the north-west and back to the Railway Station via Station Road.
- X32 route, which runs along both the Gateway and Cultural spines, connecting to Oxford in the north-west and Harwell Campus to the south-west.
- 95 route, running from the bus station to the Orchard Centre via Station Road, extending north of the railway tracks into the Ladygrove estate and connecting to Clifton Hampden and Culham Science Centre in the north.



Transport Infrastructure | Public Transport

Base map: Google Earth



Transport Infrastructure | Challenges & Opportunities

The stakeholder consultation highlighted current issues at several specific locations around the town, in particular Jubilee Way Roundabout, Central Drive junction, Cow Lane underpass and the narrow section towards the eastern end of Broadway. It also raised the more general concerns of parking and traffic speeds particularly in relation to travel safety.

The completion of the HIF1 schemes and NPR3 will provide a strategically important alternative route for Didcot, not just supporting new housing and employment opportunities but also helping reduce congestion and providing real sustainable travel options by improving walking and cycling connectivity and improving bus journey times. The schemes will enable consideration of measures within the central corridor that may not be currently be viable, enable the prioritisation of pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists.

Jubilee Way Roundabout

Congestion at Jubilee Way Roundabout has been considered to be the most significant traffic issue in the town for some time. Whilst there is provision for active travel at the junction, this involves diversion off key desire lines on a number of arms and wayfinding is not clear.

Previously, a scheme to increase the capacity of the roundabout was investigated but not progressed. Since this time, policy has been adopted which places higher priority on active travel rather than increasing traffic capacity. Also the land that was required for that scheme is no longer available.

The completion of the HIF1 schemes and NPR3 will provide a strategically important alternative route for Didcot. This will support new housing and employment opportunities, will also help reduce congestion and provide real sustainable travel options. Any new scheme at Jubilee Way Roundabout will need to prioritise the travel movements of pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists, improve bus journey times and incorporate residual motor vehicle traffic.

Hitchcock Way / Central Drive Junction

Stakeholders have raised that the current signal junction at the access to the Orchard Centre can experience queueing and delays, particularly at weekends. Pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists are provided for, but some maintenance may be required.

Once the HIF1 and NPR3 schemes are operational, it is expected that the motor vehicular congestion will be reduced along Hitchcock Way.

Rail Line Severance

The existing rail line acts as a barrier to travel between the town centre and north of Didcot. Cow Lane underpass currently operates as a one-way vehicular road with a narrow footway, (cyclists are required to dismount). The link provides access to greenspace to the north of the rail line. However it is unattractive for users who are walking, wheeling and cycling. As part of Active Travel Fund Tranche-1, plans were developed to remove vehicular traffic and provide greater space for people to walk and cycle (in line with the then Covid-19 restrictions) however this was not progressed.

Further to the east, a traffic-free underpass is provided for pedestrians and cyclists. It is understood from stakeholders, that this is not well used at night due to safety concerns. There is limited visibility due to overgrowth on the Hitchcock Way side and lighting levels are low. Cyclists headroom is limited.

The new HIF1 Science Bridge link scheme will, upon completion, reduce north - south motorised vehicle severance between Didcot town and especially Great Western Park, with the areas north of the railway line.

Buses

The local area is well served by buses, and they are a key mode of transport. Many of the services link the wider area to Didcot Station, which is an important interchange within the County. Further services are also planned to be implemented via developer funding. Whilst limited on-carriageway infrastructure is provided within the Central Corridor, it is understood that buses typically operate without issue except at key traffic hotspots including Jubilee Way Roundabout, the eastern end of Broadway due to the narrow available width and Station Road at peak times.

Any new schemes will need to be designed to ensure that bus journey times and reliability will be carefully considered.

Broadway frontage

Towards the eastern end of Broadway, parked vehicles reduce the usable width of carriageway which can result in limited space for two larger vehicles (such as HGVs and buses) being able to pass each other. This can lead to congestion, and vehicles mounting the already narrow footway to create sufficient space to pass. Vehicles manoeuvring into and out of spaces can also add to congestion and queueing.

This, in conjunction with limited infrastructure provision for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists, can lead to the area feeling unattractive and dominated by traffic.

Traffic demand along the Didcot Central Corridor is expected to reduce once the HIF1 and NPR3 schemes are operational. There is opportunity to improve the feel and character of the area for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists by reducing the dominance of traffic, reducing vehicle speeds and improving provision for active travel. This action would also reduce the likelihood of serious accidents and severance of the town centre triangle with the outer areas of Didcot.

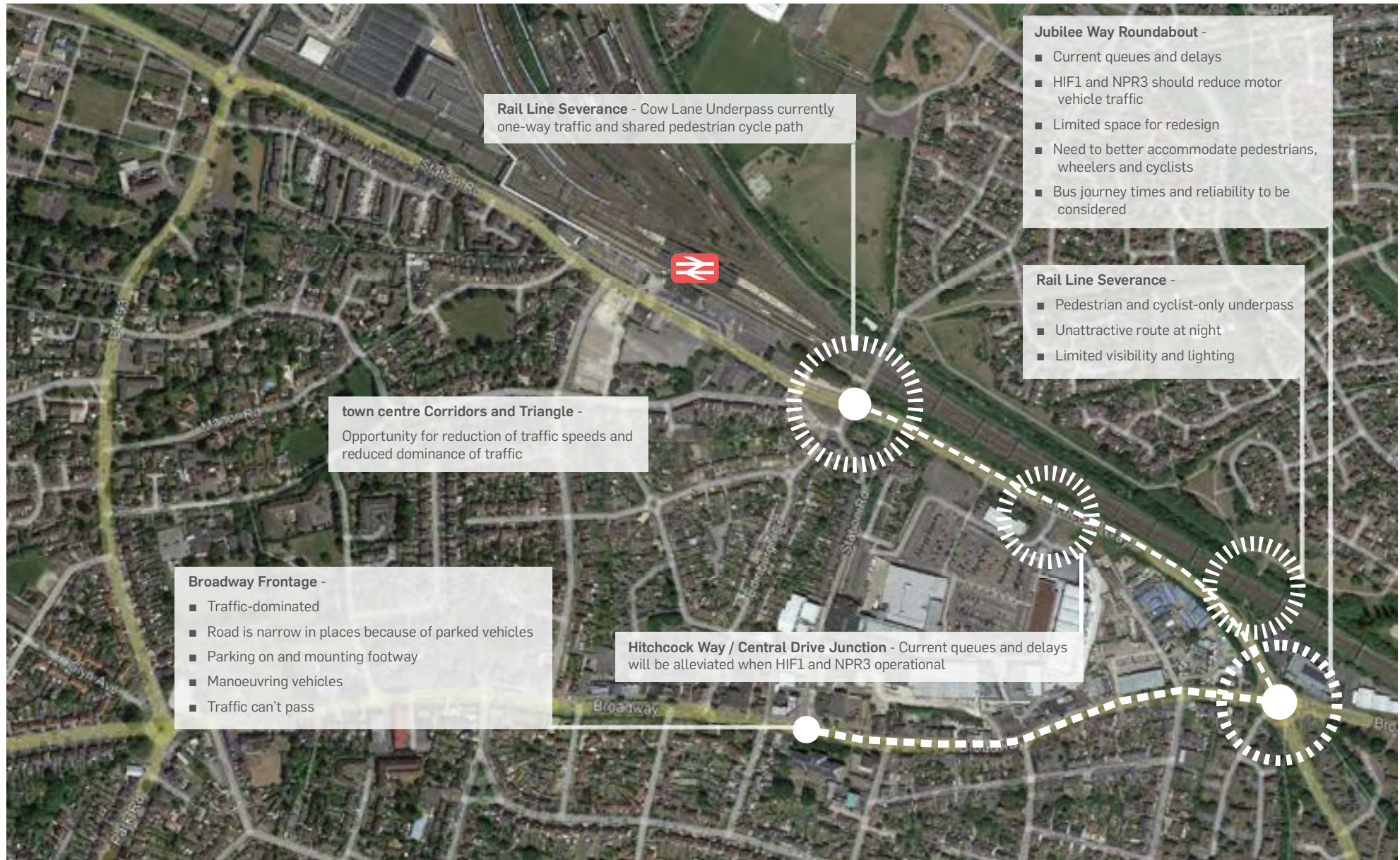
Future Technologies and Trends

Science Vale is one of the largest science and technology business clusters in the UK. A number of trials of future technology are already underway, including the use of autonomous vehicles at Milton Park.

It will be key for transport infrastructure in Didcot to be able to accommodate new pioneering technology, such as autonomous and alternative fuel vehicles.

Transport Infrastructure | Challenges & Opportunities

Base map: Google Earth







Placemaking Strategy

Placemaking Strategy | Vision

An Improved Sense of Place

A series of interlinked high quality public realm spaces; connecting the station with the town centre along accessible streets incorporating clear way finding, continuous paving materials, street furniture and planting.



Key Aims & Objectives

Enhance Sense of Identity

- Through relinking, reinvigorating and enhancing the streetscape.

Increase Green and Blue Infrastructure

- Through creating a network of green streets and new community open spaces to bring life and colour to the streets.

Improve Sense of Arrival

- Through enhanced gateways, links and relationship between the town centre, High street and surrounding areas.

Reduce Traffic Dominance & Promote Sustainable Travel

- Through improved public transport and active travel networks/facilities to encourage wider use.

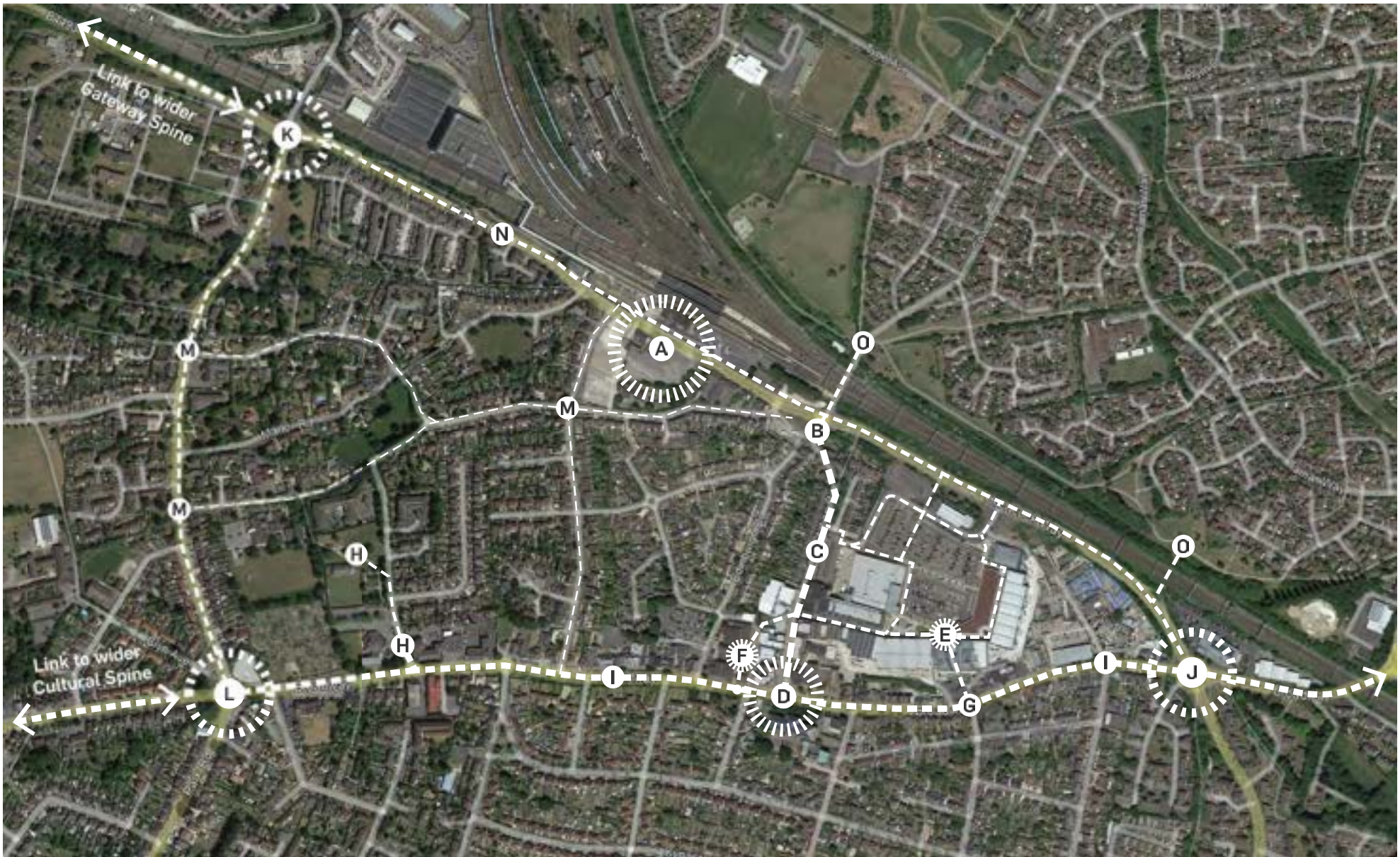


Key Opportunities:

- A). Railway Station arrival/ spill-out space: with enhanced pedestrianisation and clear wayfinding to the town centre.
- B). Open public gateway space: a vibrant communal green space, allowing better crossings for walking, cycling and wheelers. A new space that functions as a node between the north and south town, Railway Station and town centre.
- C). Enhanced approach to Station Road: forming the link between the Railway Station and town centre.
- D). Proposed Town Central Square: Wide, flexible public realm.
- E/F). Improved interconnection of public realm spaces: between the Orchard Centre, Arts Centre, Marketplace and Broadway Town Central Square.
- G). Enhanced pedestrian, cycling and wheelers permeability and linkage between the Orchard Centre and Broadway.
- H). Improved link and wayfinding between the town centre and Civic Hall area.
- I). Upgraded streetscape to Broadway: Reduced street clutter and coherent paving and furniture with border planting.
- J/K). Enhanced gateways to Jubilee Way Roundabout and West Gateway Spine: Heritage/Science art installation, signage with upgraded planting.
- L). Enhanced gateway to west end of Broadway/Cultural Spine: with wildflower planting and interactive public art features.
- M). Enhanced streetscape to residential streets: street tree planting and delineating roadside-cycle lane vegetation for improved comfort and safety.
- N). Enriched cycle and pedestrian experience along Station Road and Hitchcock Way: Linking wider suburbs and Milton Park with a delineated two-lane cycleway.
- O). Upgraded existing links between the north and south under the railway line: Potential for artwork and lighting to the underpasses for improved safety and experience.
- P). Improve the quality of bus infrastructure to improve bus service and its' profile.

Placemaking Strategy | Key Opportunities

Base map: Google Earth



Place and Space | Public Realm

Vision

- Enhance the identity and sense of place of the town through high quality public space.
- Reinvigorate the town's streets and encourage wider use and activity into the centre.

Key Principles

- Identify use and character of the town's spaces.
- Increased pedestrian & cycle priority and comfort.
- A range of usable spaces which facilitate the needs of the community.
- A continuity of materiality for enhanced identity through the public realm.
- Create opportunities for play for all ages to maximise social interaction and dwell time

Throughout the town centre there is a discontinuation of materiality and character in the public realm, an issue resulting from the various developments throughout the years.

Building on the vision for reconnecting these spaces through wayfinding and materiality, much of this will be achieved through the application of a consistent public realm theme throughout; consisting of a paving and street furniture Palette that is applied to all pedestrian areas along Broadway/Cultural Spine, Railway Station/Gateway Spine and interconnecting streets such as Station Road. This will form cohesion in the streetscape, enrich the town's core character and enhance its sense of place. Improvements to the public realm should ensure that all Public Rights of Way are protected and enhanced, and should not be affected during construction.

The focus will be on reinvigorating these streets and spaces for increased pedestrian, wheeler & cycle priority and comfort, reinvigorating the town's streets and encourage wider and prolonged activity in the centre. This will be achieved through capitalising on large areas of under-utilised public space and extending these spaces through the reconfiguration of car parking and road widths, as well the reduction of car parking dominance and street clutter, creating flexible open spaces with better connectivity and opportunities for street activities and community events.

Potential Street Furniture and Paving Materials



Pedestrian Public Realm Areas: High Quality Concrete Flags - with attractive colour mix (example: Marshalls Modal Paving)



Pedestrian Public Realm Areas: Steel and timber benches and bins - extending the products used within existing redeveloped areas (example: Orchard Centre)



Public Realm Areas with Traffic: Red brick setts with flush concrete kerbs - as used within the Station Road-Broadway junction area



Public Realm Areas: Raised planters with timber edge seating (example: Orchard Centre)



Side Streets: Concrete flag paving - to match what is currently used in some areas (example: railway station)



Pocket Park Areas: Extensive raised planters with timber edge seating (example: Orchard Centre)

Place and Space | Public Realm

Public Realm Masterplan - Highlighting key focus areas covered in more detail in the following pages



Place and Space | Public Realm

Focus Area 1: Railway Station Approach

When exiting the station. Visitors will enter a wide-open congregation area of high-quality hard paving, seating, planting, interactive public art and visitor signage such as directional maps and wayfinding signposts. A pedestrian and cycling crossing across from this area will direct visitors across the road to the Didcot Gateway development area.

A wide pedestrian footway with integrated furniture, street tree planting and wayfinding extends eastwards to and through the proposed new open communal park space to the Lydalls Road - Station Road junction. This flexible space can offer a much-needed town centre green open space, with spots to rest and congregate. It could include raised planting beds with seating edges for informal short-stays or sheltered seating structures for social gatherings. Open lawn space can provide flexible areas for community events and activities.

The Railway Station footway could extend through the space to link onto Station Road leading southwards to Broadway. Along this route the footway could be widened, with a continuation of contrasting paving to the carriageway to signify that traffic is restricted to the bus route and residential properties to prioritise pedestrian flow. Seating and wayfinding signage continues the public realm theme to link up with the town square on Broadway junction.



Case Study - Kingston Railway Station, UK



Case Study - Kingston Railway Station, UK

Place and Space | Public Realm

Focus Area 2: Town Square

This area to the junction of Broadway and Station Road currently hosts wide footways with recently installed high quality paving. This could be extended into a proposed raised table across Broadway carriageway, with contrasting tones to retain delineation between the public realm and traffic whilst encouraging a more pedestrian-friendly space.

The raised table could extend up to the Mereland Road junction in the east and Edinburgh Drive in the west, joining up with the north and south commercial sides of Broadway and the entrance to the Cornerstone Arts Centre marketplace.

Future development to this marketplace area extending around the premises of the arts centre and cinema linking to the Orchard Centre shopping corridor, could include resurfacing and upgrading street furniture to reflect the wider proposals material palette. The needs of users of all ages will be accommodated, including shelters and seating spaces for younger people to socialise. This will give continuity, unlocking the space for greater use as an accessible community marketplace and events area.



Case Study - Market Square, Kingston UK



Case Study - Market Square, Kingston UK

Place and Space | Public Realm

Focus Area 3: Broadway East

Measures will aim to increase pedestrian, wheeling and cycling priority in the public realm, reducing car parking to form spaces of congregation and swale vegetation borders for sustainable drainage.

The area could extend the material Palette from the new town square, with opportunities for active frontage space and congregation to service opportunities for future developments, including space for 'café culture'.



Case Study - Kingston Market, UK



Case Study - St Christopher's Place, London UK

Place and Space | Public Realm

Focus Area 4: Broadway West

Extension of the town square material Palette through the full extent of the west end of Broadway will form continuity through this area which is currently a patchwork of clashing styles with a reduced sense of character and place. The reconfiguration of parking in a parallel formation would significantly widen the public realm for outdoor dining and street activities.

An upgrade to the hard paving with pockets of seating and activated frontages, combined with lines of street trees to both the north and south sides of the road. This will all help to create a boulevard character that better reflects the function of a town centre High street with enhanced sense of place. Reduction of street clutter and reconfiguration of street furniture can create more clear walkways for all users, with additional cycle stands throughout.

This materiality could extend to the Didcot Civic Hall area where a second raised table paved area, similar to the town centre square, could unify the area to join up with the rest of Broadway and town centre.



Case Study - Sheffield, UK

Place and Space | Street Greening & Community Green Space

Vision

- New and valuable green spaces for people to rest and socialise.
- Flexible open space for community events.
- Well connected green and blue infrastructure.
- Use vegetation to improve the town's identity and enhance sense of place.
- Encourage biodiversity and reduce pollution.

Key Principles

- Green spaces that link together through the street network. Potential to provide opportunities for community growing space.
- Enhance streets through street tree planting corridors, ornamental seasonal planting and wildflower verges implementing climate change-resistant species.
- Use trees and planting to enhance the quality of the street setting for pedestrians and cyclists, creating shade and separation between the public realm and traffic.
- Incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) as a sustainable means of collecting surface run-off and increased permeability.

Whilst wider areas of Didcot host large-scale communal parks, mostly within residential areas, there is no substantial open green space in the town centre. Creating areas of flexible amenity park space where people can meet, relax and socialise is essential for bringing life to the centre.

This extension of green infrastructure can continue through the main High street and residential roads in the form of street trees, raised ornamental planters, wildflower verges and Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) raingarden channels. Street greening can provide shade and a soft buffer between the carriageways and public realm for greater street character and comfort, seasonal change, environmental and well-being benefits.

Case Study - Grey to Green, Sheffield City Centre

The Grey to Green is an award-winning 3-phase environmental and economic development undertaken by Sheffield City Council in Sheffield Centre. The scheme aimed to transform the car-dominated grey streets into a calming refuge of green public space that encourages walking and cycling. It responds to three key issues:

1. Re-connect areas of the city, such as the Castlegate area, with the city centre.
2. Utilise large amounts of under-utilised highway space.
3. Mitigate the impact of flooding, reflecting on the devastation caused by the Castlegate floods in 2007.

Since its delivery, the scheme has had significant positive economic and environmental impacts, including:

- Attracting new office and residential developments to the area.
- Increased biodiversity and improved surface water management.
- Increased cycling and walking in the area, contributing to the development of the night time economy and 'cafe culture'.






Place and Space | Street Greening & Community Green Space

Green Infrastructure Masterplan - *Highlighting key focus areas covered in more detail in the following pages*



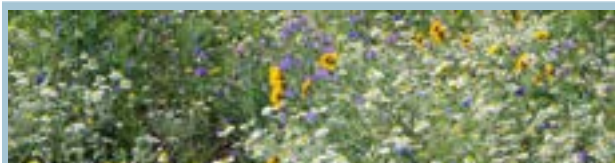
Place and Space | Street Greening & Community Green Space

Focus Area 1: Broadway / West Cultural Spine and Residential Streets

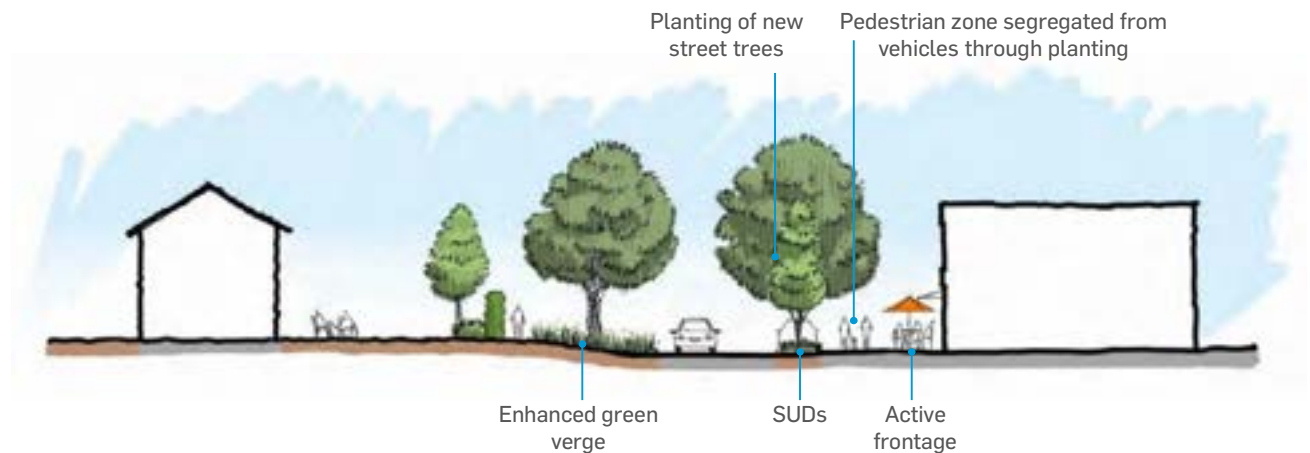
The existing wide grass verges to the south side of Broadway could be planted with swathes of wildflower, echoing the successful use of roadside wildflower outside the Didcot Civic Hall. This would bring seasonal change to the streetscape with summer blooms of colour, elevating the appearance of the street whilst providing ecological benefits with new habitats for pollinating insects and invertebrates.

The widening of the public realm to the north of Broadway presents an opportunity for cycle lanes and streetside planting. These can be potentially in the form of raised ornamental planters with integrated seating or raingarden channels flush with the road surface to collect surface water run-off. This attractive streetside planting helps to separate and delineate the public realm from the road, improving the pedestrian experience, comfort and well-being in the space for rest and outdoor seating opportunities. This footway widening also allows for street tree planting to both sides of the road, creating a buffer between the residential properties and a boulevard effect to enhance the street character and establish it as the main High street of the town. Areas of wider vegetation space also provides opportunities for community growing spaces, which would allow residents to care for and pick their own produce and form better social connections.

Street tree planting can continue throughout many of the surrounding residential streets such as Foxhall Road and Lydalls Road, creating delineation between the footways and road traffic for an improved sense of safety to key school walking routes. Existing ancient trees and TPOs could be celebrated with features such as benches and information plaques for more interaction and awareness of their value.



Case Study - Wildflower verges, London Olympic Park



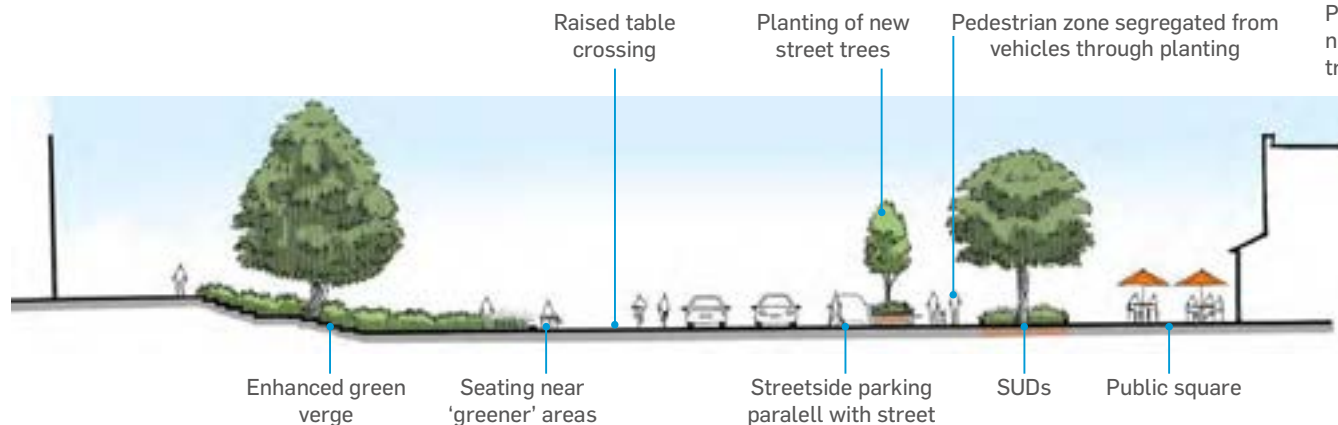
Place and Space | Street Greening & Community Green Space

Focus Area 2: East Gateway and Cultural Spines

A continuation of the boulevard street trees and delineating roadside vegetation along Broadway to Jubilee Way Roundabout will help to tie the whole High street together and encourage development to the east end where its most needed.

Due to Broadway's gradient, sloping down from west to east there are greater opportunities for raingarden SUDs planting to the east end, particularly the north side of the road. Raingarden planting could occupy areas of widened footway where parking has been removed, creating a buffer between the heavy traffic and store frontages to encourage development with more outdoor use and active frontages. To the far end at Jubilee Roundabout gateway, vast areas of asphalt could be repurposed for attractive raingarden planting areas to soften the hard nature of the traffic-dominated entryway.

Existing vegetated edges to Hitchcock Way, Station Road and the railway along the Gateway Spine can be enhanced through improved management and wildflower planting for greater biodiversity and appearance. New strips of vegetation could create separation between the busy traffic and cycleways/footways, for improved user comfort to encourage use.



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Routes

Vision

- High quality transport measures and wayfinding that will increase connectivity and accessibility between different areas of the town centre and Didcot to improve community, social connectivity and wellbeing.
- Enhanced connected active travel on key links around the town including routes that link seamlessly as a network, making it more attractive for people to walk and cycle (includes other wheelers - mobility scooters ebikes, escooters).
- Healthier, more active population with reduced reliance on private motorised vehicle travel.

Key Principles

- Directional and clear spaces with wayfinding.
- Continuous palette of high-quality materials and furniture throughout the town centre.
- Well-connected transport/mobility hubs and stops with the wider active travel and public transport networks.
- Improved pedestrian and cyclist links, re-balancing pedestrian and vehicle hierarchy, includes:
 - Side road-treatment and improved pedestrian facilities along key routes
 - Dutch-style Roundabouts (Junctions with strong pedestrian, wheeler and cyclist provision)
 - Segregated Cycle tracks where possible
 - Schools Streets safe pedestrian and cycle routes
 - Parklets with benches
 - Traffic management/calming measures
 - Other infrastructure aligning with the new highway code and LTN 1/20.

There is a strong sense of disconnect throughout the town between key areas and destinations.

Reconnecting these areas through street network enhancements and public realm improvements can unlock opportunities for development and increased town activity, in turn strengthening the town's identity and sense of place.

The route between the Railway Station and Broadway High street in particular needs improvement. Visitors arriving at the Railway Station require visual guides in the public realm to direct them to the central hub of activity in the centre of Broadway. Through a combination of wayfinding, street furniture and paving materials consistently used through a series of visually interlinked public realm spaces between the station and Broadway can form a clear route which provides high quality communal spaces for activity and rest, reconnecting the Railway Station with the heart of the town.



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Routes

Case Study The Gold Route, Sheffield City Centre

Similar to Didcot, before the Gold Route development it was not immediately clear for visitors arriving at Sheffield Railway Station where they should go. Due to steep landform and large-scale mid-20th Century developments the station had become disconnected from the city centre.

The Sheffield 'Gold Route' development consists of a network of public realm spaces and streets intended to take visitors arriving at the station to the University of Sheffield Campus and main High street, considered in the City Centre's core strategy as the 'Heart of the City'.

Along the route includes Sheaf Square, Howard Street, Hallam Gardens, The Millennium Galleries, Winter Gardens, Millennium Square and ending at Peace Gardens and the City Hall new retail quarter.

The route is built of a continuous Palette of street materials, including sandstone and stainless steel which are reflective of the city's history and character. Whilst each space is interconnected through a consistent theme of paving and street furniture, they each have their own distinctive character and element, such as water features, lighting and



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Routes

1. Railway Station Arrival

An attractive and welcoming arrival space for visitors, with a clear and unobstructed pedestrian route leading people to the town centre via Station Road. The station gateway space could provide a large meeting and resting area with space to cater for future enhanced bus facilities. A sculptural feature could heighten this sense of arrival and town identity, along with clear wayfinding to guide visitors to their destinations. The materiality of this area extends into a pedestrian-priority crossing area, safely taking pedestrians to the adjacent Didcot Gateway Development, where this continuation of materials and wayfinding directs users. A two-way cycle lane flush to the public realm provides a safe route for cyclists through the area.



Case Study - Kingston Railway Station, London UK



2. Open Public Gateway Space

Currently a disused car parking area and demolition site, this area has potential to become a vibrant area of activity with a communal green open space connecting the Railway Station with the town centre link via Station Road.

The space offers a green space with sheltering trees, providing opportunities to rest, socialise and hold activities and events. From here, visitors are made aware of the connection down Station Road to Broadway High street, guided with a straight and unobstructed path, continuing the materiality and wayfinding from the Railway Station arrival area.



Case Study - Grey to Green, Sheffield UK



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Routes

3. Station Road Link

This corridor can form an enhanced approach through improved streetscape.

Pedestrian, wheeler and cycle travel can be prioritised through the continuation of pedestrian paving running through the street with vehicle access restricted to buses and residents to Station Road.

The straight nature of the street, combined with lines of tree planting screening the unsightly car parking and refuse storage areas, direct people to the town centre square to the south of Station Road meeting onto Broadway.



Case Study - Howard Street, Sheffield UK



4. Town Square

Where the Station Road station link meets the centre of Broadway, Orchard Centre and Cornerstone Arts Centre Marketplace, this area could be elevated to become the core of the town's activity through a vibrant town square that ties the town's main corridors together.

A raised table to the road junction can increase pedestrian priority and comfort in the space whilst reducing traffic to acceptable speeds, combined with reinvigorating paving materials and street furniture to make better use of the existing wide areas of public realm for active frontages, market stalls and communal events.



Case Study - Market Square, Kingston UK



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Routes

5. Civic Hall Campus & Cultural Spine

Through continuous public realm enhancements along the full length of Broadway, the Communal District area to the far west, including the Didcot Civic Hall, Didcot Library and Didcot Health Centre can be better connected with the rest of the town centre.

The buildings that form this area currently lack relation to one another but the surrounding wide open areas of under-utilised public realm provides the opportunity to connect these developments together through a paved raised table area extending across Broadway and Britwell Road; creating an open space for the local community and connecting gateway space to the far west of the Cultural Corridor.

Extensions of the cycle lane along Broadway into this area allows connection with some of the wider cycle network to the new residential developments in the west.

Enhancements to this area could attract further developments in the future for more arts/cultural and retail facilities to service the local residential community, further expanding Broadway's influence through the central corridor of the town.



Case Study - Legible London map signage



Case Study - Sign post, Kingston UK

Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Routes

6. Gateway Spine – Cultural Spine link

The east end of Broadway is currently under-utilised due to its disconnection from the town centre, resulting from a combination of heavy traffic to Jubilee Way roundabout to the east, the dividing railway line and Hitchcock Way traffic to the north, and Orchard Centre development backing onto it to the west.

Improving this gateway area to Jubilee Way roundabout where the Gateway and Cultural Spines link, development opportunities can be unlocked to the east end of Broadway to extend retail and commercial activity. Improved permeability between Broadway and the Orchard Centre development, through wayfinding and improved pedestrian footway and cycle way links through the south entrance of the Orchard Centre, can further increase potential for future developments and businesses in the area.

7. North-South Town link

The severing effects of the railway line and Hitchcock Way/ Station Road traffic could be alleviated through enhancing the existing pedestrian and cycle links whilst providing new connections. The existing underpasses could be refreshed through incorporating artwork and lighting, combined with a more visibly permeable approach with reduced screening vegetation for increased natural surveillance, a greater sense of safety and user comfort.

It is acknowledged that there has been historic public support and investigation for a cycle and pedestrian footbridge extending over the railway tracks, linking the Ladygrove residential area with the town centre.



Case Study - Gravesend Grammar School underpass art



Case Study - Gravesend Grammar School underpass art

Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Gateways

Vision

- Create attractive and welcoming entrance spaces that celebrate the town's current innovations and heritage.

Key Principles

- Welcoming installations and features to key gateway locations, such as:
 - Railway Station arrival
 - Western ends of Gateway and Cultural Spines (Science Bridge and Harwell Link Road junctions respectively)
 - Jubilee Way Roundabout
 - town centre Gateways on Gateway and Cultural spines at each end of Foxhall Road
 - Ladygrove Gateways at the two underpasses under railway line north of Hitchcock Way.

Currently the gateway entry points to the town are underwhelming and under-utilised. These gateways can function better to welcome people entering Didcot and showcase what the town has to offer, in terms of culture, heritage and innovation. This in turn will establish the town's brand, character, and sense of place.

Enhanced gateways could include a mixture of ornamental vegetation, community artwork installations and active sculptural features (where possible) with integrated welcome signage.



Image credit: Keresaspa



Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Gateways

Key Gateways Masterplan - Highlighting key focus areas covered in more detail in the following pages

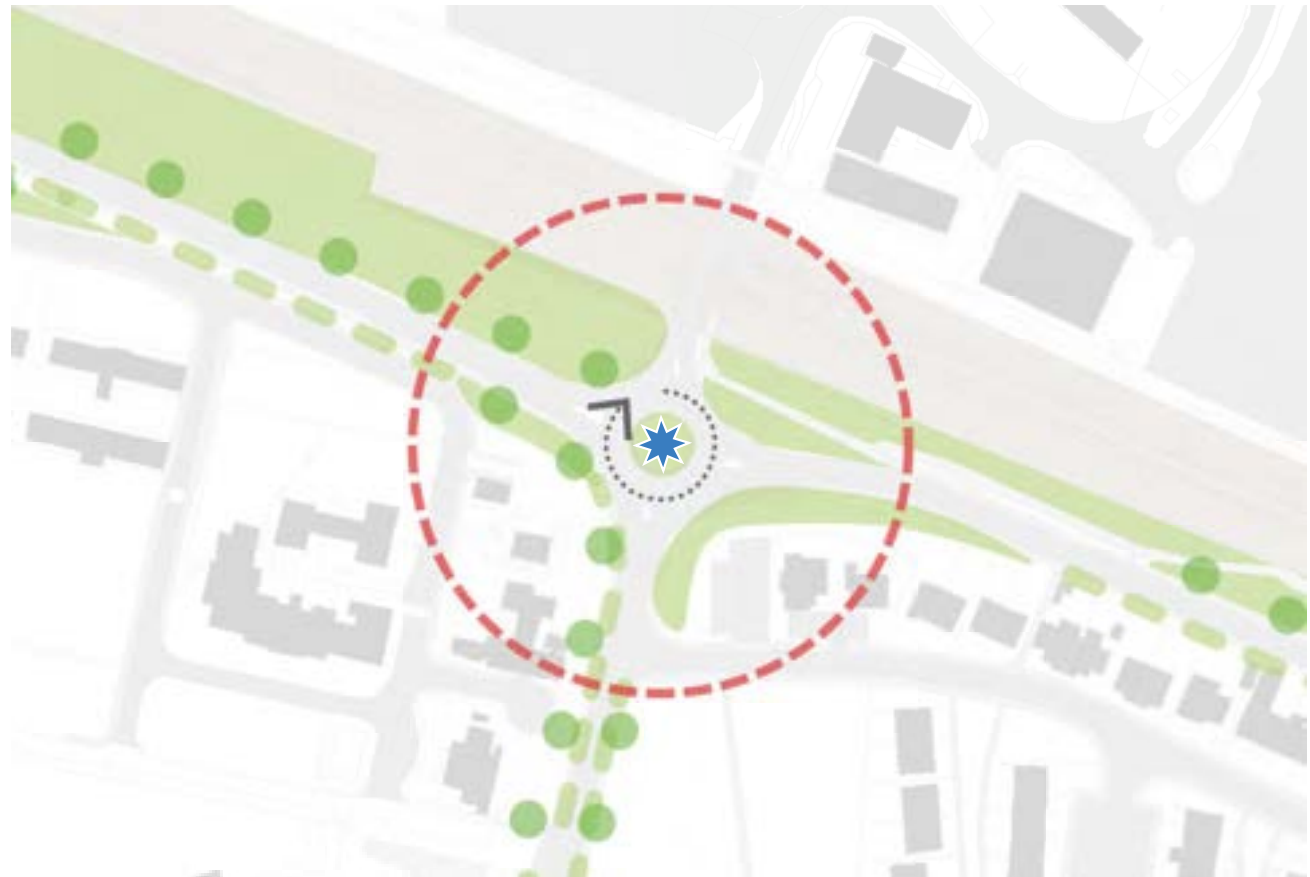


Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Gateways

1. Station Road - Foxhall Road Junction

Located to the west end of the Gateway spine this is the entry point into the town centre entering from the east along the A34 and links the town centre with the Milton Park development in the west.

To relate to the nearby Milton Park, and future Science Bridge development, this gateway could celebrate the town's role in science and innovation in the form of a science-themed sculptural feature to the centre of the roundabout. Wide planted verges to the road edge could be utilised for extensive wildflower verges for a vibrant setting rich with biodiversity and seasonal change.



Case Study - Belfast, UK.

Photo credit: Keresaspa



Case Study - Dorking, UK.

Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Gateways

2. Railway Station Gateway

The Railway Station should be used to its fullest potential as an essential destination, with clear wayfinding for walking and cycling with enhanced green spaces for people to rest.

This gateway is the first impression that visitors entering the town via train will have of Didcot, and therefore should exemplify the town's character.

Visitors are greeted with a high-quality open public realm space for rest and congregation, potentially with an eye-catching gateway sculpture installation. This central feature, set amongst an attractive planting area, could be a playful and interactive feature which also reflects the local railway heritage and signposts the entrance to the Didcot Railway Centre Museum that adjoins the station building.



Case Study - St Pancras Station Statue



Case Study - St Pancras Station welcome signage feature

Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Gateways

3. Jubilee Way Roundabout

This gateway is the entry point of the town centre from the east, connecting the Gateway and Cultural Spines.

Currently there is a lot of under-utilised, hard-paved space with railings which could be planted with high quality ornamental planting, creating attractive and welcoming year-round seasonal blooms that soften the surrounding built form.

The centre of the roundabout is a potential location for an artwork installation, potentially commissioned through engagement with local artists in the community. This artwork could be themed around the town's heritage or a celebration of its current innovations in science and technology.

Currently the roundabout is notorious for congestion, so any improvements to traffic flow resulting from future transport proposals will significantly improve the quality of this gateway for pedestrians and cyclists.



Case Study - 'Paper Trail' artwork, London UK



Case Study - Railway sculpture, Stratford - London UK

Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Gateways

4. Broadway – Foxhall Road Junction

Located to the far west end of Broadway High street along the Cultural Spine, this is the entry point into the town centre and main High street of the town from the west.

At present there is a vibrant mix of vegetation in this area, with extensive wildflower verges and mature street trees. This vegetation could be enhanced further as part of any redevelopment on the currently empty development opportunity site on the Foxhall Road-Broadway corner on the north side of the junction. There is potential for local artwork to be incorporated within the setting, potentially through local engagement in artwork events or involvement from local schools.



Case Study - Olympic Park, London UK



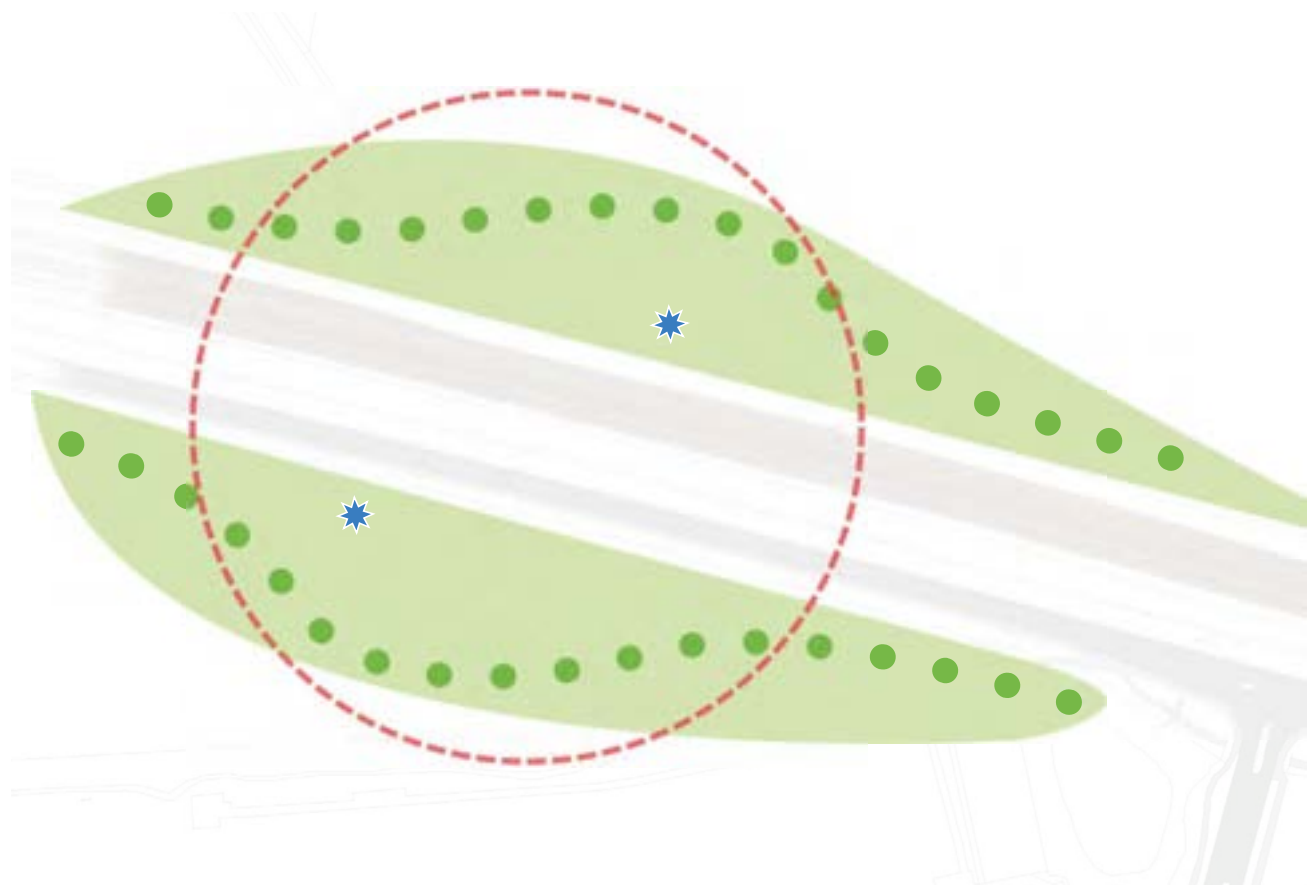
Case Study - Olympic Park, London UK

Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Gateways

5. North-West A4130 Gateway

This area is the gateway into the outer Gateway Spine suburbs and industrial district of the town.

Due to the featureless nature of this area, the tree-lined road would benefit from a bold 'welcome' gateway feature to the roadside; greeting people into and out of Didcot town for increased sense of place and arrival. This could be set within a widened area of soft landscaping, such as wildflower meadow planting; a change in roadside character along this stretch signalling the arrival into the town.



Case Study - Zell Am Harmersbach, Germany



Case Study - Welcome text feature, Kingston UK



Case Study - Roadside wildflower verges

Connectivity and Wayfinding | Enhanced Gateways

6. South-West B4493 Gateway

This is the entry point into the town from the outer Cultural Spine, including the A34 into the town's outer south-west suburbs, predominantly made up of new residential developments.

The area benefits from wide open views due to the agricultural land uses in the vicinity. There is no transition between this agricultural setting and the entry into the town, therefore some form of gateway feature to the roundabout, highlighted with a change in planting typologies to vibrant wildflower and ornamental street trees, could signify this entry point.



Case Study - Olympic Park, London UK



Case Study - Roadside wildflower verges, Brighton UK



Case Study - Tower bridge, London UK

Transport Infrastructure | Schemes

Vision

- Provide easy access to key locations by active travel modes, including green spaces, public transport facilities and around the town centre
- Improve reliability of journey times for buses

Key Principles

- Encouraging through-traffic to avoid the town centre.
- Attractive and joined up networks for walking and cycling.
- Increased priority for active travel modes at key junctions, whilst still accommodating local traffic.
- Access for Pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists across the rail line.

Connectivity with A4130 / NPR3

Signage Strategy for Through Traffic

The completion of HIF1 schemes and NPR3 are anticipated to reduce pressure on the Central Corridor with through traffic to use this alternative route.

A signage strategy at key decision points on the network should encourage through traffic to avoid the town centre. This would have a positive impact on existing congestion and queuing at key pinch points, including Hitchcock Way / Central Drive junction, Jubilee Way Roundabout and Broadway.

Wider Active Travel Routes

When completed, the A4130 alternative route will provide real sustainable travel options by improving walking, wheeling and cycling connectivity. To capitalise on this, it will be important to ensure that active travel routes along the Central Corridor connect into this, particularly at Hadden Hill and the new Science Bridge.

Jubilee Way Roundabout

With the completion of the HIF1 and NPR3 schemes, congestion at this roundabout is anticipated to be reduced. This will improve bus reliability and the user environment for active modes. There is also recognition for the need for a more modern design at this junction which gives greater priority to pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists whilst accommodating local traffic.

The amount of space at this location is constrained by adjacent land uses but there is unused space around it. A roundabout with parallel cycle and pedestrian zebra crossings, similar to one successfully implemented in Cambridge, would give greater priority to cyclists and reduce traffic speed, creating a safer environment for walking and cycling, whilst still accommodating local traffic.

This is also a 'Gateway' location with the roundabout being a potential site for a local artwork installation and enhanced planting where space allows.

Case Study - Cambridge Dutch Roundabout

Fendon Road Roundabout near Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Implemented in 2020.



Rail Line Severance

The Cow Lane and the eastern underpass are currently unattractive to users and present a barrier for travel to green space north of the rail line, as well as access to the town centre from the northern parts of Didcot.

Improving active travel links across the rail line is essential to facilitate this movement by non-car modes, providing access to important community assets.

Provision of a traffic-free link close to Didcot Station would offer a safe and convenient route for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists to key destinations. Careful consideration would need to be given to the form of such infrastructure; either prioritisation of active travel modes through an existing underpass or provision of a new link over the rail line (subject to feasibility).

There is opportunity to improve the eastern underpass to be more attractive to users, including lighting and drainage upgrades and improving visibility through maintenance / removal of overgrowth. Further landscape improvements, planting and artwork are envisaged.

Building on the vision for 'Connectivity and Wayfinding', these are 'Gateway' locations and could incorporate mixture of ornamental vegetation, active artwork installations and integrated welcome signage to act as enhanced gateways to the town centre.

Case Study - King's Boulevard, St Pancras, London UK



Transport Infrastructure

- A) **Railway Station arrival.** Raised table crossing across Station Road to give pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists priority with speed reduction features.
- B) **Pedestrian, wheeler and cyclist enhanced environment** giving priority.
- C) **Pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists priority.** Restricted access for buses and residents only. Speed reduction features.

- D) **Town square** with raised table crossing.
- E) **Speed reduction and / or traffic management features.**
- F) **Traffic calming / parking rationalisation** to facilitate through flow of local traffic and improve environment for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists.

- G) **Jubilee Way Roundabout.** Modern layout to give greater priority to pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists Entry point to 'The town centre Triangle 20mph Zone'.
- H) **Hadden Hill.** Signage for through traffic to use A4130 / NPR3 route. Active travel connectivity.
- I) **Upgrade/maintenance to show greater pedestrian, wheeler and cyclist priority.**
- J) **Reduce railway line severance.**
- K) **Town Centre western gateways.** Entry points to the town centre area. Infrastructure for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists.
- L) **Science Bridge.** Signage for through traffic to use A4130 / NPR3 route. Active travel connectivity.
- M) **Gateway and Cultural outer spines.** Improved infrastructure for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists.



Transport Infrastructure

Town Centre

Gateway Spine

Railway Station Arrival

A 'Gateway' location at the Railway Station brings together the placemaking vision for 'Connectivity and Wayfinding' and 'Place and Space' discussed in earlier sections. Provision of a raised table crossing across Station Road outside the Railway Station and a continuation of materials from the pedestrianised area would show priority to pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists and clearly indicate the route to the town centre. It would also function as a speed reduction and traffic management feature. The space would take into consideration any potential extensions and developments to the bus infrastructure.

20mph speed limit zones are becoming common throughout England, and Oxfordshire County Council has already changed its approach to enable a much greater coverage across Oxfordshire in an aim to make streets safer, encourage walking or cycling, and reduce noise and pollution. A speed limit reduction in this location would further enhance the sense of quality and place for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists.

Railway Station to the town centre

Beyond the raised crossing area on Station Road, the 'Connectivity and Wayfinding' vision includes an off-road segregated route for each of pedestrians and cyclists (currently shared on the north side). It continues along Station Road to Lydalls Road where 'active travel' modes turn right to join Station Road southbound for the most direct route to the town centre.

A continuation of this route could involve restricting access to buses and residents only from the junction of Station Road and Hitchcock Way. This would give a further enhanced pedestrian, wheeler and cyclist environment, with rationalisation of on-street parking potentially offering segregation and a reduction in the dominance of cars. There is a 'Space and Place' vision at the Station Road, Hitchcock Way Junction, punctuating 'Connectivity and Wayfinding' to the town centre. Addressing all active travel modes here will improve these users experience.

A speed reduction to 20mph could be continued throughout the length of Station Road, signifying that the route is for active travel modes and local traffic only.

Hitchcock Way

The pedestrian environment on Hitchcock Way (and a section of Station Road) could be improved through the realignment of the segregated cycle and foot path provision to place pedestrians further from vehicles at the back of the footway. A speed reduction to 20mph would further improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists alongside the 'Place and Space' vision for it.

The junctions with Station Road and with Central Drive have shared pedestrian and cycle crossing provision. Some updating/maintenance would be beneficial to demonstrate priority for walk, wheeler and cycle modes.

Cultural Spine

Broadway (west of Jubilee Way Roundabout)

Once the HIF1 schemes and NPR3 are complete, Broadway's function should be to serve local demand only. Reduction of the dominance of traffic will improve the feel and character of the area for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists, and have a positive impact on air and noise quality.

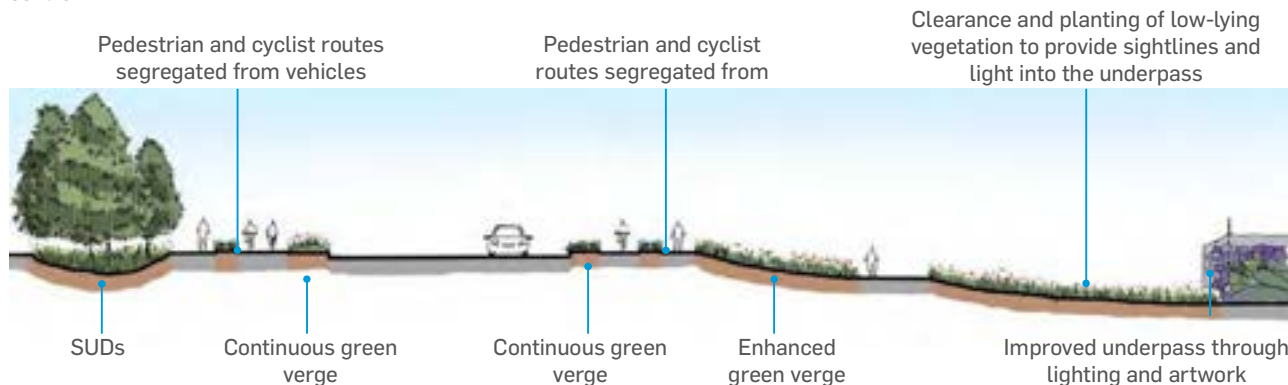
Building on the visions for 'Place and Space' and 'Connectivity and Wayfinding', reducing the dominance of vehicles would further enhance the sense of quality and place for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists. Associated measures could include a 20mph speed limit zone, the provision of quality crossing points and more space for pedestrians, stop and rest space, planting and cycle parking.

A rationalisation of on-street parking would resolve existing pinch points where there is limited space for two larger vehicles to pass due to parked cars, improving journey time reliability for both buses and local traffic. With the visions for 'Wayfinding and Connectivity' and 'Place and Space', this would also create additional space for cyclists and potentially flexible open spaces with opportunities for street activities.

The Triangle

This central area, enclosed by the town centre sections of Gateway Spine, Cultural Spine and Foxhall Road, comprises primarily residential and retail landuses plus schools where vehicle volumes and speeds should be as low as possible.

Low traffic speeds help achieve safer, pleasant and more cohesive neighbourhoods where walking, wheeling and cycling is commonplace. This area would be a natural extension of any traffic management schemes proposed on adjacent main roads. The entry points into the triangle would tie in with the town centre 'Gateways' proposed on each spine at their junctions with Foxhall Road and extend to Jubilee Way Roundabout.



Transport Infrastructure

Outer Corridors

Gateway Spine

A4130 to Railway Station

The Gateway Spine provides a key travel route between the A34 and the town centre. The completion of HIF1 schemes and NPR3 will re-route through-traffic, with the focus of this spine then becoming for local trips only. A Gateway at Milton Park would provide a clear sense of arrival to Didcot and link the area to the town centre via the Gateway Spine and a further 'Gateway' feature at the junction with Foxhall Road.

Whilst there is some shared foot /cycle path provision, it is narrow in places and varies in quality. Provision of a continuous and consistent route for cyclist and pedestrians to the town centre would support the use of active travel modes on this corridor. This provision should link into, and where possible align with the standard of, that proposed for the Science Bridge to encourage active travel across the wider network.

Elements of street greening suggested as part of the vision for 'Place and Space' could be extended along the Corridor to echo the sense of place from the town centre and enhance the street setting. The provision of seated resting points could encourage further uptake of active travel modes by those who are less physically fit.

Broadway and Hadden Hill (east of Jubilee Way Roundabout)

Whilst this part of the corridor does have some off-road cycle way provision, the form and quality varies and there are some gaps.

Provision of a continuous and consistent route for cyclist and pedestrians, segregated where possible, would support seamless journeys for users of all abilities and provide a link into active travel provision being delivered as part of NPR3.

Cultural Spine

Didcot Road / Wantage Road

Similar to the Gateway Spine, there is limited sense of arrival to Didcot on the Cultural Spine. A 'Gateway' feature close to the A34 would provide a highlight to road users that they are entering a more residential area. Complementing the existing attractive planting at the Foxhall Road junction, 'Gateway' treatment here extending west to include the Didcot Hospital and retail area, will provide an upgrade and an introduction to the town centre.

Active travel infrastructure is currently varied, with gaps in provision for cyclists and a range of on- and off-carriageway facilities. Provision of a continuous and consistent route for cyclist and pedestrians to the town centre would facilitate active travel between the residential areas and town centre. Further street greening, which could be combined with seated resting points, would enhance the sense of place and provide shade for users which is currently lacking in places.

Buses

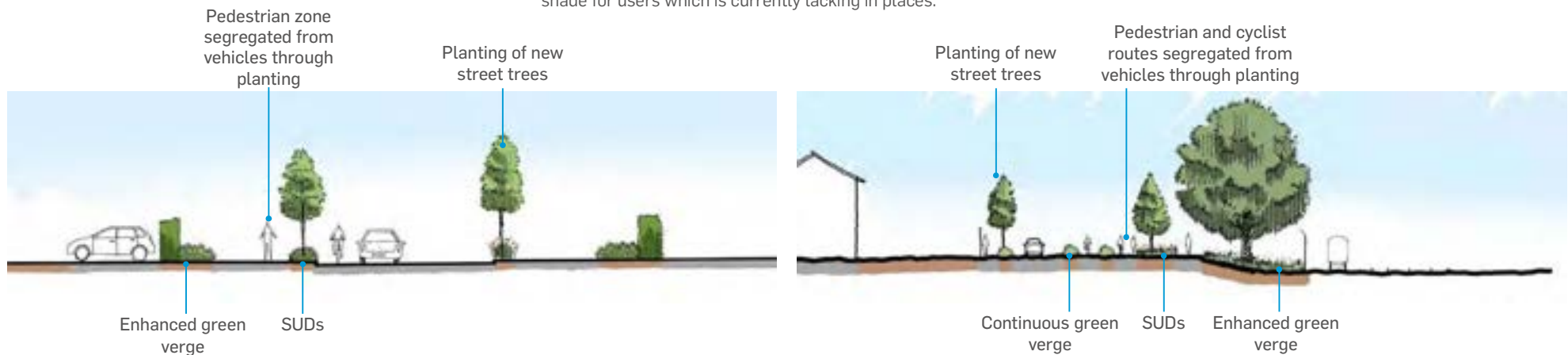
The style and quality of Bus Stops around Didcot should be consistent with appropriate waiting facilities, including the stop flag, shelter, seating and information to inform journeys. Transport hubs to some key locations, such as Great Western Park and the new town square, could consist of larger bus shelters with cycle stands. This will complement 'Wayfinding and Connectivity' to and from the wider Didcot area.

Future Technologies and Trends

It will be key for transport infrastructure in Didcot to be able to accommodate new pioneering technology to reinforce its reputation as a technology industry leader.

Provision of additional infrastructure for alternatively fuelled vehicles, such as electric vehicles, would support the use of more sustainable private cars and delivery vehicles. The location of such facilities in areas most convenient for local facilities could further encourage a shift to low-fuel vehicles, although careful assessment would be needed to ensure this would not be to the detriment of Blue Badge parking.

The infrastructure needs for other technological advances, such as autonomous vehicles or robots, are not currently clear. Consideration would need to be given to any emerging options to ensure that infrastructure improvements wouldn't preclude the inclusion of required infrastructure at a later date.





Placemaking Strategy Summary

Placemaking Strategy | Summary

Key Aims & Objectives

Enhance Sense of Identity

- Through relinking, reinvigorating and enhancing the streetscape.

Increase Green and Blue Infrastructure

- Through creating a network of green streets and new community open spaces to bring life and colour to the streets.

Improve Sense of Arrival

- Through enhanced gateways, links and relationship between the town centre, High street and surrounding areas.

Reduce Traffic Dominance & Promote Sustainable Travel

- Through improved public transport and active travel networks/facilities to encourage wider use.



A Vision for Oxfordshire:

“A place where streets, through integrated and quality design, lead to a greater economic and social well-being and improved health for its residents, creating an environment for healthy lifestyles, sustainable travel and a zero carbon economy.”

Street Design Guide - Oxfordshire County Council (2021)

“In line with good placemaking, streets should help to ensure that each new development or intervention contributes positively to creating or enhancing places within which children, adults, families, communities, businesses, and nature can thrive.”

Street Design Guide - Oxfordshire County Council (2021)



Building on the aspirations established by the Didcot Garden Town Development Plan, this Placemaking Strategy has set out numerous ambitious concepts for enhancing the town's public realm, transport infrastructure and green space; aiming to reimagine, relink and reinvigorate the area for the benefit of local residents, businesses and future developments.

Next Steps

The aims, objective and principle ideas born from this Placemaking Strategy will form the basis for the development of more detailed proposals for the corridors as part of the Options Appraisal Stage. The findings and conclusions that follow from these optioneering exercises will result in the production of an Options Appraisal Report (OAR).



ATKINS

Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group