

# Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

## Oxfordshire Growth Board Infrastructure Sub-Group

HELD ON MONDAY 1 MARCH 2021 AT 2.00 PM

VIRTUAL VIA MS TEAMS

### Present:

**Members:** Councillor Ian Hudspeth (Chair), Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker, Councillor Yvonne Constance, Councillor Lynn Pratt, Councillor Judy Roberts and Phil Southall

**Officers:** John Disley (Oxfordshire County Council) and Kevin Jacob, (Oxfordshire Growth Board).

### 23 Apologies for absence and notifications of substitutions; declarations of interest; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Jeff Haine and Councillor Tom Hayes.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 24 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### 25 Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study: Completion and Next Steps

The subgroup considered a report, introduced by John Disley, Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Manager, Oxfordshire County Council, which set out the final conclusions of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study, a programme of work part-funded by the Growth Board and other partners. The report followed the completion of the first stage of the project which had been reported to the Growth Board in January 2020, and summarised the work completed since then, which had quantified and the interventions and schemes on the main Oxfordshire Rail Network which would be required to enable the connectivity and capacity enhancements outlined in the first stage. The subgroup was updated on several amendments to the circulated report and it was highlighted that:

- There was a need to invest in the overall capacity of Oxfordshire rail infrastructure and a review of the proposals had concluded that investment in capacity would lead to benefits, (including to connectivity) which went beyond Oxfordshire and which could be of national significance given the contribution of Oxfordshire to the overall regional and

national economy. It was important to continue to emphasise this within the narrative to HM Government.

- The two main interventions to the Oxfordshire rail network (between Wolvercot North junction and Didcot and the Didcot to Highworth junction near Swindon) set out in the study were essentially prerequisites to any potential further network interventions, particularly the main rail network through Oxford station.
- The outcome of the second stage of the study represented an opportunity to move forward in developing a comprehensive delivery programme for the Oxfordshire Rail Network via a rail industry pipeline of projects with a clear idea of the highest priorities, but it was not an end to the process and further proposals, each requiring individual business cases, funding and approvals would be needed. Whilst it was felt that a strong case could be made nothing could be guaranteed

In discussion, members of the subgroup acknowledged the need to prioritise interventions and raised the potential impact of other national rail infrastructure projects such as HS2 and improvements to signalling technology on rail capacity within the current network, particularly linked to freight. The relationship between high level local plan sites and the building of cases for rail infrastructure investment associated with those sites was discussed and it was felt that important that stations should act as hubs for different modes of public transport and support the principles of active travel.

It was noted that a final version of the report to the Growth Board would be circulated for information as soon possible and officers were congratulated for their efforts in bring the study to this point.

It was agreed to:

1. Note the outcomes and conclusions of the completed Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study
2. Recommend endorsement by the Growth Board to the proposed next stages of work to be progressed in partnership with Network Rail via the governance mechanism outlined in the report under the 'Oxfordshire Connect' banner.

## **26 Dates of next meetings**

The dates of future meetings as set out in the Agenda were noted.

The meeting closed at 2.50 pm