

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Infrastructure Advisory Group

HELD ON MONDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 2.00 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA MS TEAMS

Present:

Members: Councillor Liz Leffman (Chair), Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker, Councillor Duncan Enright, Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Councillor Lynn Pratt, Councillor Judy Roberts and Phil Southall

Officers: Hannah Battye (Head of Infrastructure Delivery, Oxfordshire County Council), John Disley (Infrastructure Strategy and Policy Manager, Oxfordshire County Council), Kevin Jacob, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Archie Martin, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership) and Paul Staines, (Interim Head of Programme)

16 Apologies for absence and notifications of substitutions; declarations of interests; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Jeff Haine, West Oxfordshire District Council.

There were no declarations of interest or Chair's announcements.

17 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 28 June 2021 were agreed a correct record, subject to the correction of minute 12, second paragraph referring homes associated with the Howes Lane realignment from 6,000 to 600.

18 England's Economic Heartland Connectivity Studies Update

The Advisory Group was provided with a presentation by Naomi Green, Interim Director, England's Economic Heartland and Abigail Nichols, Project Lead England's Economic Heartland, (EEH) on the development by the EEH of a series of connectivity studies linked to travel corridors connecting Oxford with a number of towns and cities within the greater Oxfordshire to Cambridgeshire and EEH geography. It was highlighted to the Group that:

- EEH was the Sub National Transport Body covering the area from Swindon to Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire to Hertfordshire.
- EEH's connectivity studies would play a key role in shaping the regions investment priorities going forward. The studies would provide the evidence and insight into options for delivering the principles of EEH's Transport Strategy.
- The Transport Strategy published in February 2021 set out a plan of action to deliver decarbonisation of the transport system, investment in digital infrastructure, transformation of public transport, increase investment in local connectivity and to continue to meet freight and logistics needs.
- The target was to achieve decarbonisation by 2050, but the ambition was to achieve this by 2040, recognising the scale of the challenge to do so.
- The connectivity studies being worked on had been prioritised after a rigorous selection exercise. Two studies were currently in progress, Oxford - Milton Keynes, Peterborough – Northampton - Oxford and a third, Swindon-Didcot-Oxford, was due to commence in December 2021.
- Outcome based objectives and critical success factors for the studies had been developed and issues, opportunities, and attractors.
- Key areas of opportunity identified include:
 - improved active travel integration
 - new and emerging technologies
 - shared transport solutions
 - the opportunity provided by East West Rail
 - digital connectivity
 - linking land use and transport.
- Governance of the studies would be undertaken through the EEH Strategic Leadership Board which included elected representatives of the highway's authorities within the EEH area, (including Oxfordshire County Council) and Growth Boards, (including The Future Oxfordshire Partnership). In addition, a steering group would consider and guide the studies.
- A land use model EEHLUM (EEH Land Use Model) was being developed to assess the impacts of the short list of interventions against modal share, Gross Value Added, (GVA), population and carbon.
- The outputs of the study were expected to be a corridor plan with a package of interventions for inclusion in EEH's investment pipeline. An Options Appraisal Report would be produced alongside the final report which would provide a narrative for the package of interventions supported by evidence.
- Initial outputs on the first two studies were currently due end of December 2021, with the final reports being available in Spring 2022, with the agreement of the EEH Strategic Transport Leadership Board.

In response to question, it was confirmed to the Group that the EEHLUM model was based on land use principles rather a network approach to develop an evidence as part of the connectivity studies. Further information could be provided to members in due course via a summary.

EEH was working closely with national bodies such as National Highways and the Department for Transport, (DFT) on roads such as the A34, but also sharing information and working with local partners such as Oxfordshire County Council.

In discussion, various members of the Group referred to concerns which had been reflected to them previously by the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum regarding the suitability of the assessment models and criteria currently used by National Highways with

regard to the development of proposals for the A34. It had been felt that these were now overly focussed on improvements for private car use rather than assessment of interventions which would support wider transport climate action. There was acknowledgement that National Highways was in the position where they had to work to assessment models set by the Department for Transport, but it was felt that it remained important to seek to influence HM Government practice and policy on the issue. The Group was informed by John Disley, Infrastructure Strategy & Policy Manager at Oxfordshire County Council that the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which was due to go out to public consultation, provided a high status, visible example of Oxfordshire's policies towards the objective of reducing journeys by car and encouraging travel by other modes, which needed to be factored into the assessment process for transport schemes. It was hoped this would help influence HM Government to consider refocussing its assessment criteria.

Members of the Group also queried and stressed the importance of connectivity between different localities and transport hubs such as those associated with East West Railway and that felt this should be taken account of as part of the connectivity studies. The Group was informed that consideration was being given as part of the work around the connectivity studies to issues such as support for active travel modal share.

Members also queried how one of the critical success factors running through the connectivity studies, to increase active travel modal share between town and cities might be achieved across corridors such as Milton Keynes - Oxford and Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford, given that much of the current transport infrastructure along these corridors was dual carriageway in nature and formed part of the national logistics and distribution network. Travel associated with other major town such as Aylesbury also impacted on these corridors. The importance of bus mass transport was also highlighted.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair thanked Naomi Green and Abigail Nichols for their attendance and the presentation and commented that the Group looked forward to seeing the results of the connectivity studies at a suitable point in 2022.

That the presentation be noted.

19 Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Infrastructure Project - Six Month Review

The Advisory Group considered a report presented by John McLauchlan and Hannah Battye, Heads of Service Infrastructure Programme Officer and Infrastructure Delivery, Oxfordshire County Council, which set out proposed changes to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, (H&GD) Infrastructure Programme following a recent periodic review. It was proposed that:

1. That further funding be removed from a scheme currently within the H&GD – the A4095 (Howes Lane) re-alignment.
2. re-allocating of this funding, to include a scheme presently outside the H&GD – the A34 Lodge Hill interchange.

The Group was informed that the proposed changes followed examination of the current cost and programme projections for the Infrastructure schemes within the HGD Infrastructure Programme and were designed to ensure that:

- the annual Infrastructure spend profile agreed with Homes England as part of the agreement (£30m per annum for each of the five years of the H&GD) was met.
- the housing numbers identified as being attributable to the delivery of the Infrastructure were maximised.
- the Infrastructure schemes within the programme were deliverable both in terms of:
 - their budgets as currently allocated (whether that be solely from H&GD or from multiple funding sources)
 - their delivery timescales align with the H&GD (March 2023)

In discussion, the Group carefully considered the recommendations and the various potential alternative options detailed in the report, noting that Oxfordshire County Council would take a formal decision on the proposed changes as the accountable body for the H&GD and also as the delivery body for the infrastructure programme elements of the H&GD.

Officers stressed the priority of maximising housing numbers attributable to the delivery of infrastructure as a requirement of the H&GD. In the case of A4095 re-alignment scheme, the scheme was now not considered to be a scheme which should continue to be funded within the strict criteria of the H&GD, as it was not expected to accelerate previously forecast numbers of houses. This did not mean that the scheme was not needed or was not a highly important infrastructure scheme linked, as it was, to future housing growth in Bicester. Officers commented that they would be continuing to work closely with colleagues at Cherwell District Council around possible alternative funding solutions including the potential of working further with developers. It was also noted that the proposed changes would be brought to the attention of the Future Oxfordshire Future Oxfordshire Partnership Housing Advisory Group in light of their impact on deliverable housing numbers.

Councillor Lynn Pratt expressed her profound disappointment as a representative of Cherwell District Council over the proposed removal of the A4095 scheme from the programme, whilst acknowledging the requirements of the H&GD, the periodic review, and the wider infrastructure programme. She commented that she hoped that should new funding become available, the scheme would be considered favourably as appropriate.

It was noted that reallocating the funding to the A34 Lodge Hill slip road scheme would add an additional net 200 houses to those included in the original H&GD period, a total of 350.

The Chair commented that the need to make the most effective use of resources within the H&GD was accepted, but that that this could lead to difficult choices. Every effort would continue to be made to find the best way forward in respect of the A4095 scheme.

The Group noted the report and proposed recommendations.

20 Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy Update

The Advisory Group was provided with an update on the progress of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy Stage One report, (OxIS), by Paul Staines, Interim Head of Programme, Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Team. It was noted that as a consequence of the recent public consultation on the draft OxIS, a number of potential additional infrastructure projects had been submitted and it was considered appropriate and prudent for the OxIS consultants engaged to support the development of the Strategy to undertake further evaluation of the schemes prior to the finalisation of the OxIS Stage One report. The short delay to the next Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting cycle would also allow for further consideration of any implications from the recently agreed Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Although there would be a cost implication of approximately £7k arising from the additional work, the project would remain within its overall budget and it was felt the expenditure represented good value for money in the context of delivering the best and most robust strategy possible. It was confirmed to the Group that the delay to the publication of the OxIS Stage One report to January 2022 would not impact on the timeline for the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 or indeed, the programme for the completion of the OxIS Stage Two report.

The Group noted the update.

21 The Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan - role of IAG / FOP in providing a framework for success

The Advisory Group held a discussion about the development of a future item to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership linked to strategic transport. Phil Southall, as member of the Group and Chair of the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum, (OSTF) introduced the item and set out the role of the OSTF as a countywide body including representatives from a range of transport providers, local authorities including Oxfordshire County Council, National Highways and freight transport representatives and the linkages that existed between its work and that of the Advisory Group and Future Oxfordshire Partnership as a whole.

Members of the Group were referred to the recently published Bus Service Improvement Plan, (BSIP) agreed by Oxfordshire County Council. It was suggested that the BSIP, which outlined how the county council and local bus operators would seek to achieve the outcomes of the National Bus Strategy to build back bus usage to pre-pandemic levels and increase the modal share of bus travel and the actions arising from it, could provide a starting point in considering potential future strategic transport issues that there could be value in the OSTF and Advisory Group on working collaboratively. Further information on how to take this forward could be brought to the next meeting.

The Chair asked that an item around the issues discussed be further developed and brought back to the next Group meeting. It was agreed that copies of the BSIP would be circulated to the members of the Advisory Group for information.

22 Introduction to the UK Infrastructure Bank

The Advisory Group further discussed the possibility of a future agenda item relating to the establishment of the United Kingdom Infrastructure Bank, (UKIB), following the previous

consideration of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel report on private investment in public infrastructure projects.

In discussion, it was felt that further work was required to understand what the context and impact of the establishment of UKIB might be and whether any emerging opportunities existed in terms of infrastructure funding within Oxfordshire.

It was agreed that Officers would prepare a briefing note on the UKIB for a future meeting in early 2022.

23 Dates of future meetings and draft work programme

The Advisory Group considered the dates of future meetings and its indicative work programme. It was noted that as agreed previously in the meeting, items would be added to the work programme relating to the Oxfordshire's strategic transport needs and the UKIB.

It was agreed to reschedule the proposed 25 April date to a date in March.

In discussion of the work programme, various members commented that they felt there would be value in a further joint working group or joint meeting with the members of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Advisory Group, and potentially also the Housing Advisory Group, to discuss the infrastructure and housing elements of the Plan as it progressed towards the Regulation 19 milestone. Officers advised that the optimal time for such a meeting would follow on from the development of the Plan spatial options. It was felt that this would not be before spring and officers agreed to look into the precise timing.

Finally, it was suggested that the Connecting Oxford Project was another potential item for 2022.

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm