



Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan Highways & Transport Context

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- 1. Introduction
- 1.1. What is a Neighbourhood Plan
- 2. National and Local Policy and Guidance
- 2.1. National Policy Guidance
- 2.2. Local Plan
- 2.3. Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan
- 3. Local Context
- 3.1. Location & Transport Context
- 3.2. Highways Capacity

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 5
- 6
- 8
- 9
- 11





1. Introduction

1.1. What is a Neighbourhood Plan

The Localism Act 2011 introduces the right for communities to shape their local areas by creating their own Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Sutton Courtenay Parish Council is currently in the process of preparing the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan, which “gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area” (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2014).

1.2. Purpose of this Document

This document seeks to supplement the evidence base that informs the Neighbourhood Plan policies that guide the assessment of future development proposals and encourage high quality design.

In particular, this document provides background information in respect of the existing transport network, including road, rail, cycle and pedestrian routes. Information is also provided on the improvements proposed to accommodate growth in the wider area.





2. National and Local Policy and Guidance

2.1. National Policy Guidance

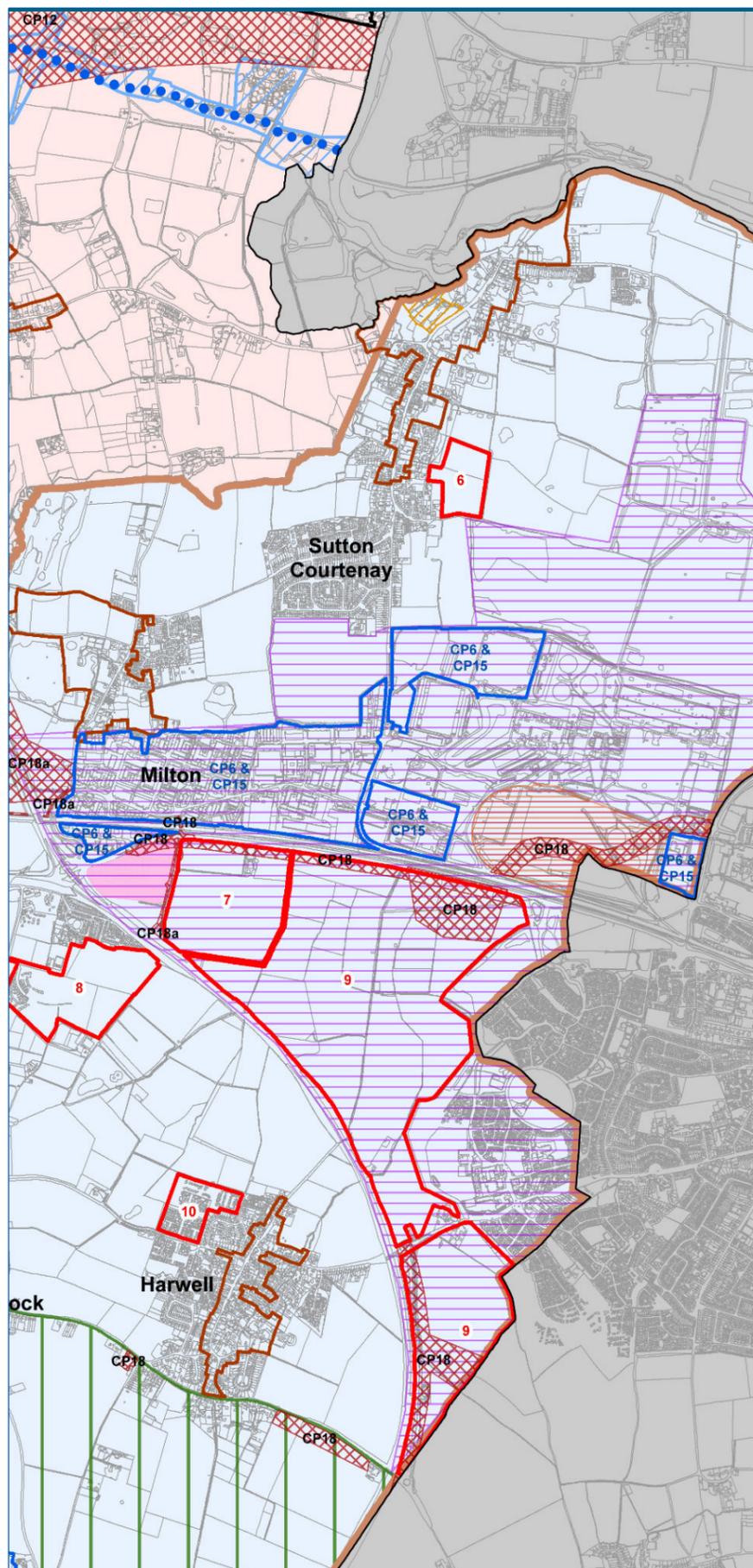
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted by the Government in March 2012 and revised in February, June 2019 and again in July 2021. All the policies in the NPPF constitute the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means in practice. The NPPF sets out how the Government intends to deliver sustainable development through the planning process. It expressly states that sustainable development is about achieving positive growth, balancing economic, environmental and social considerations.

Part 9 seeks to ensure that “transport issues...are....considered from the earliest stages of plan-making”, so that:

- (a) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;
- (b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;
- (c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;
- (d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and
- (e) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.

Part 9 of the NPPF also prescribes that planning policies should:

- (a) support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities;
- (b) be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned;
- (c) identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development;
- (d) provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks with supporting facilities such as secure cycle parking (drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans);
- (e) provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy. In doing so they should take into account whether such development is likely to be a nationally significant infrastructure project and any relevant national policy statements; and
- (f) recognise the importance of maintaining a national network of general aviation airfields, and their need to adapt and change over time – taking into account their economic value in serving business, leisure, training and emergency service needs, and the government’s General Aviation Strategy.



2.2. Local Plan

The development plan for the Parish currently comprises the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (Dec 2016) and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (Oct 2019). The Local Plan identifies a number of key challenges and opportunities that are faced by the district and these are focused around four thematic areas.

- building healthy and sustainable communities,
- supporting economic prosperity,
- supporting sustainable transport and accessibility, and
- protecting the environment and responding to climate change.

Core Policy 17: Transport Delivery for the South East Vale Sub-Area recognises the need to “mitigate the impact of the planned growth across Science Vale”. As a consequence “all development within the South East Vale Sub-Area will be required to contribute towards the infrastructure identified within the Science Vale Area Strategy”.

Core Policy 18: Safeguarding of Land for Strategic Highway Improvements safeguards land to support the delivery of the prescribed transport infrastructure schemes. Of relevance to Sutton Courtenay are:

- Science Bridge and A4130 re-routing through the Didcot A site.
- A4130 dualling between Milton Interchange and Science Bridge.
- A new Harwell Link Road between the B4493 and A417 and Southern Didcot Spine Road.
- A new strategic road connection between the A415 east of Abingdon-on-Thames and the A4130 north of Didcot, including a new crossing of the River Thames.
- Improvement of the strategic cycle network.

Paragraph 5.93 of the Local Plan also prescribes that land will be safeguarded “to deliver a South Abingdon bypass crossing the Thames and connecting with the A415 and some junction improvement schemes”.

The Local Plan includes a number of District wide policies, including: Core Policy 35: Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking aims to achieve modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable modes of travel.

Core Policies	Development Policies
□ District Boundary	□ Town Centre Policy Area (DP13)
□ Development Boundary (CP4)	□ Primary Shopping Frontage (DP13)
□ Strategic/Additional Housing Allocations (CP4, CP4a)	□ Secondary Shopping Frontage (DP13)
□ Science Vale Ring Fence (CP6, CP15)	□ Local Shopping Centre (DP13)
□ Strategic Employment Sites (CP6, CP8, CP15, CP20)	□ Lorries and Roadside Services (DP19)
□ Abbey Shopping Centre and the Charter (CP10)	□ Thames Path National Trail (DP31)
□ Land Safeguarded for Highways Improvements (CP12, CP12a, CP15, CP18a, CP19, CP19a)	□ Ridgeway National Trail (DP31)
□ Oxford Green Belt (CP13, CP13a)	□ Wilts and Berks Canal (DP32)
□ Land Safeguarded for Reservoir (CP14, CP14a)	□ Proposed New Route of Wilts and Berks Canal (DP32)
□ Area Safeguarded for Flood Risk Management (CP14)	□ Registered Parks and Gardens (DP36)
□ Grove Airfield (CP15, CP15a)	□ Conservation Area (DP37)
□ Didcot A Power Station (CP16)	
□ Didcot Garden Town (CP16b)	
□ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CP44)	
□ Site of Special Scientific Interest (CP46)	
□ Local Nature Reserve (CP46)	
□ National Nature Reserve (CP46)	
□ Special Area of Conservation (CP46)	
□ Ancient Woodland (CP46)	
Sub Areas	
□ Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe (CP8, CP8a)	
□ South East Vale (CP15, CP15a)	
□ Western Vale (CP20, CP20a)	
□ Area Outside the District	

2.3. Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan

The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 sets out Oxfordshire County Council's policy and strategy for developing the transport system in Oxfordshire to 2031.

The plan sets out the overarching transport goals:

1. To support jobs and housing growth and economic vitality;
2. To reduce emissions, enhance air quality and support the transition to a low carbon economy;
3. To protect and enhance Oxfordshire's environment and improve quality of life (including public health, safety and individual wellbeing).

Policy 02: "Oxfordshire County Council will manage and, where appropriate, develop the county's road network to reduce congestion and minimise disruption and delays, prioritising strategic routes".

Policy 03: "Oxfordshire County Council will support measures and innovation that make more efficient use of transport network capacity by reducing the proportion of single occupancy car journeys and encouraging a greater proportion of journeys to be made on foot, by bicycle, and/or by public transport".

Policy 09: "Oxfordshire County Council will work in partnership with the rail industry to seek enhancements to the rail network in Oxfordshire and connections to it, where this supports the county's objectives for economic growth".

Policy 12: "Oxfordshire County Council will work with partners to identify how access to employment, education, training and services can be provided, particularly for those with disabilities or special needs, or who otherwise have difficulties in walking, cycling and/or using public transport, or for people without access to a car."

Policy 17: "Oxfordshire County Council will seek to ensure through cooperation with the districts and city councils, that the location of development makes the best use of existing and planned infrastructure, provides new or improved infrastructure and reduces the need to travel and supports walking, cycling and public transport".

Policy 18: "Oxfordshire County Council will help reduce the need to travel by improving internet and mobile connectivity and other initiatives that enable people to work at or close to home".

Policy 19: "Oxfordshire County Council will encourage the use of modes of travel associated with healthy and active lifestyles".

Policy 20: "Oxfordshire County Council will carry out targeted safety improvements on walking and cycling routes to school, to encourage active travel and reduce pressure on school bus transport".

Policy 22: "Oxfordshire County Council will promote the use of low or zero emission transport, including electric vehicles and associated infrastructure where appropriate".

Policy 24: Oxfordshire County Council will seek to avoid negative environmental impacts of transport and where possible provide environmental improvements, particularly in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas and other areas of high environmental importance.

Policy 26: "Oxfordshire County Council will aim to record, protect, maintain and improve the public rights of way network so that users are able to understand and enjoy their rights in a safe and responsible way".

Policy 32: "Oxfordshire County Council will support the development of Neighbourhood Plans. Where a Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted and providing it is consistent with LTP4, the Council will seek funding to secure the Plan's transport improvements from local developments and the Community Infrastructure Levy as appropriate".

The Science Vale

The Local Transport Plan also includes a number of area specific strategies. The strategies set out for the Science Vale are set out below:

The transport priorities for Science Vale are to improve access to Culham Science Centre and the Enterprise Zone sites at Milton Park, Didcot and Harwell Campus for international, national and local travel, to enable economic growth at other key employment sites in the area, to plan ahead to manage the impact of future housing growth on the transport network, and to improve connectivity between employment, services and areas of housing growth. To achieve this we will improve:

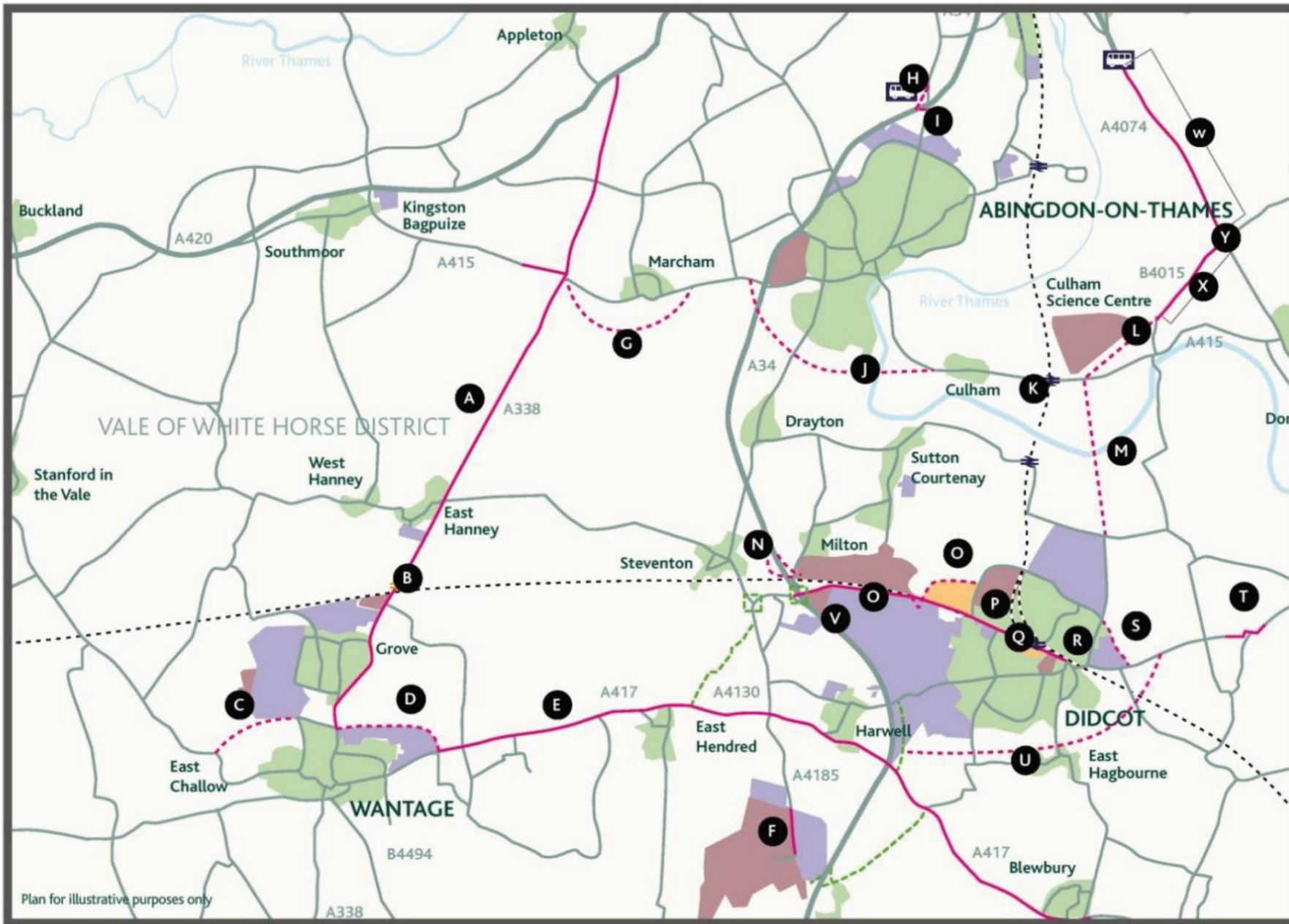
- access to strategic road and rail networks;
- opportunities for sustainable travel, on foot, by bike and using public transport (including combinations such as cycling to a bus stop to catch a bus) to help to deliver a real step-change in the provision of alternative modes of travel to the car;
- journeys across Science Vale;
- the capacity, resilience and reliability of the transport network for all modes of travel;
- connectivity between employment, services and housing;
- journeys between Didcot and the Enterprise Zone locations; and
- trips within Didcot to town centre facilities and amenities;

At Didcot Parkway station a new transport interchange has created a modern transport hub for Didcot and Science Vale. The new interchange has additional pedestrian space, a larger bus station, two-tier cycle parking, Brompton Dock cycle hire, a taxi rank, drop-off zone and disabled parking. Our ambition is for Didcot Parkway station to be further transformed into a 'state of the art' multi-modal interchange and gateway to the area. The masterplan for the station envisages a new pedestrian / cycle entrance north of the railway, additional platforms, a larger station building, and increased car parking, including a multi-storey car park. This will support the plans for regeneration of Didcot town centre, including the adjacent Gateway development site.

Figure 6 below provides an extract from the Local Transport Plan to illustrate the transport infrastructure that is proposed to support development in the Science Vale.

Science Vale Figure 1:

Indicative plan of transport infrastructure required to support development in Science Vale



Key

- Local Plan residential areas
- Local Plan mixed use areas comprising residential and employment
- Existing commercial/employment areas
- Existing settlement
- Proposed Park and Ride
- Capacity improvement scheme
- New road scheme (alignments are indicative)
- Funded scheme being delivered
- Existing Rail station
- Railway

Transport Schemes

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| A A338 capacity improvements including Frilford Lights | G Marcham Bypass | N Milton Interchange - Milton Park - north facing slips | T A4130 capacity improvements (between Didcot and Wallingford) |
| B Grove Station | H Lodge Hill Phase 1 - south facing slips | O Didcot Science Bridge & A4130 Capacity Improvements | U Didcot Southern Bypass |
| C Wantage Western Link Road | I Lodge Hill Phase 2 - Park & Ride & Freight Park | P Central Didcot Transport Corridor (Jubilee Way to Science Bridge) | V Milton Enterprise Bridge (pedestrian/cycle) |
| D Wantage Eastern Link Road (WELR) | J South Abingdon Bypass | Q Didcot Parkway Station Package + Didcot East Grade Separation | W A4074 Capacity Improvements |
| E A417 Improvements - Wantage to Blewbury including Rowstock Roundabout | K Culham Railway Station | R Jubilee Way junction | X B4015 Clifton Hampden to A4074 Capacity Improvements |
| F Harwell Campus access improvements | L Access to Culham Science Centre - Phase 1 | S Northern Perimeter Road Stage 3 | Y A4074/B4015 Junction Improvements |
| | M Access to Culham Science Centre - Phase 2 (River Crossing) | | |



3. Local Context

3.1. Location & Transport Context

Figure 9 indicates the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan. The neighbourhood plan area extends to approximately 670 hectares (1657.4 acres). The Neighbourhood Plan area does not correspond with the parish boundary. This was due to a Local Development Order being in place for land to the south at Milton Park. A further area to the south was also excluded from the Neighbourhood plan, which corresponds with the site of the former Didcot A power station and the current Didcot B Power Station. This area was excluded as a significant part of it is covered by enterprise zone and strategic employment site designations. An extension into Milton Parish to the west was included to help prevent coalescence between the villages of Sutton Courtenay and Milton.

The neighbourhood plan area adjoins Abingdon, however the village itself is situated approximately 2.5 km to the south of Abingdon. The primary route to Abingdon from Sutton Courtenay is via the Sutton Bridges, Tollgate Road and Abingdon Road (A415).

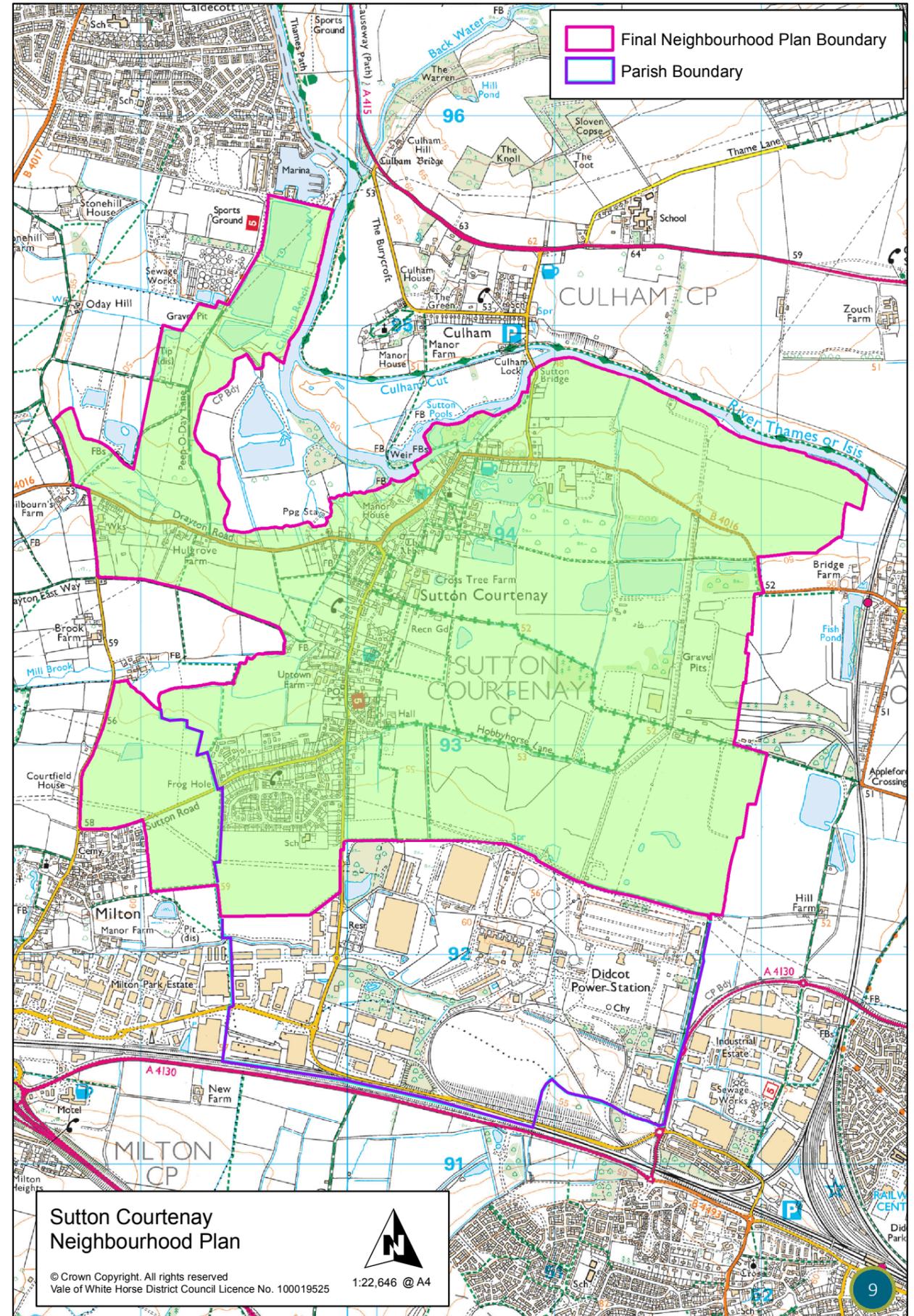
The southern boundary of the parish aligns the Great Western main railway line and the parallel A4130, beyond which lies the town of Didcot. Access to Didcot and the A4130 is provided via High Street, which leads into Harwell Road and Milton Road.

The eastern boundary of the parish runs broadly parallel with the Didcot to Oxford railway line. The land in this area has historically been used for both landfill and gravel extraction, which continues to this day, and a railway spur known as Appleford Sidings provides access to the site by rail.

The western boundary of the parish extends to Milton Road at Windy Ridge and Gilbourn's Farm, while further north, it abuts Sutton Wick Nature Reserve, Abingdon Sewage Treatment Works and Abingdon Rugby Club. The land to the west of Sutton Courtenay is largely agricultural with floodplain further north, adjoining the River Thames. Access to Milton, is via Milton Road, while access to Drayton is via Drayton Road (B4016), which runs in an east west direction between Sutton Courtenay and Drayton. West of Drayton is the A34 which runs from the A33 and M3 at Winchester, to the A6 and A6042 in Salford.

The street pattern within Sutton Courtenay appears broadly unchanged for centuries, with a strong linear form defined by Church Street to the north leading into High Street and then Harwell Road to the south. In addition, there are a number of east-west streets which intersect the north-south streets, including Brook Street, Appleford Road and Milton Road. The village is also well served by tertiary roads which link the historic core to the newer residential developments. Within the conservation area, these tertiary routes, are often represented by narrow historic lanes, while further south they are more often engineered cul-de-sacs.

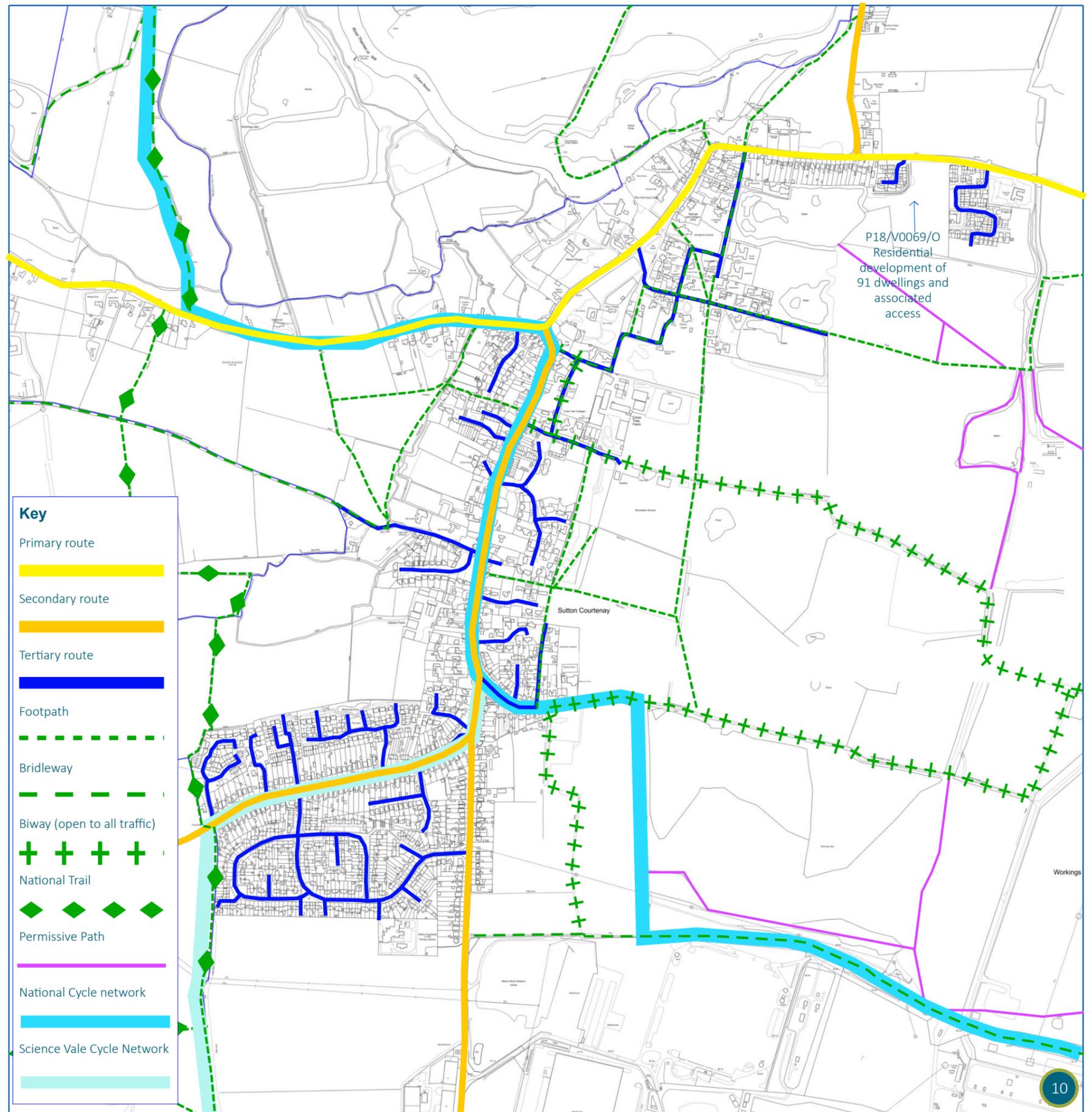
In terms of public transport, the village is serviced by the no. 33 Thames Travel Connector which provides an hourly service (5:30am and 7:30 pm) between Abingdon and Wallingford, via Milton and Didcot. The nearest



railway station is located in Appleford which is located approximately 2.5km driving distance from The Green. In addition, Didcot Parkway station is situated 6.3km from The Green.

Sutton Courtenay is well served by public rights of way (ProW) and permissive paths, and these are an important part of life in the village, as well as being important in maintaining the strong historical connection between the village and the wider landscape. These paths and lanes give the village a highly connected structure and provide a layer of pedestrian permeability outside the main vehicular routes. The Thames Path National Trail, runs along the north bank of the River Thames.

The National Cycle Network Route (NCN5) runs from Oxford to Didcot via Abingdon and Sutton Courtenay. This route, also known as Hanson Way runs through the centre of the village, but is off-road at Peep-O-Day Lane, where it uses a raised causeway leading north to Abingdon. A further cyclepath, Route 3D (Abingdon to Milton Park) is one of 8 strategic routes/corridors of Oxfordshire County Council's Science Vale Cycle Strategy. Routes 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8 are also easily accessible from Sutton Courtenay.



3.2. Highways Capacity

A number of roads within the village are considered to be operating above capacity. The Local Highway Authority has surveyed and modelled this part of the network and investigated potential improvements, including optimising and biasing signal times and introducing signals at the junction of Appleford Road and Abingdon Road. The conclusions of this work found that such alterations would not yield any benefit, rather they would simply transfer the blocking back from one junction to another. As a consequence, a number of development proposals, including small scale residential developments, have been refused planning permission by both the local planning authority and the Planning Inspectorate. A schedule of some relevant planning applications and a summary of the reasons for refusal is provided at Appendix A.

The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 has identified that a number of capacity improvements and new road links are necessary to accommodate the large scale employment and residential development associated with the Didcot Garden Town, a status that was granted in December 2015. A masterplan to guide the development of Didcot up to 2031 includes proposals for 15,050 new homes and 20,000 new jobs created in the Science Vale area.

In order to relieve pressure on this part of the network and to enable sustainable growth in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district areas a new road is proposed between north Didcot and Culham Science Centre. This road will require the implementation of an additional Thames river crossing. It will provide improved access to Culham Science Centre and a direct link to the B4016 (north of Clifton Hampden). This scheme will also better connect Science Vale and the major employment areas of Oxford in the Eastern Arc. This route will also provide some relief to the A34 for local movements as well as network resilience.

Preferred alignments for the scheme that constitute the Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (known as HIF1) programme were informed by a detailed and multi-stage optioneering exercise to identify the appropriate interventions. A public consultation exercise was undertaken in March/April 2020 on the preferred options that were identified during the feasibility design process and the preferred route alignment of the project was approved in July 2020. A funding agreement has been signed with Government securing £218m of the £234m project costs which requires that improvements be constructed by 31 March 2024

Figure 11 illustrates the preferred location for this crossing and other highway improvements.



