



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Cllr Sue Cooper  
South Oxfordshire District Council  
135 Eastern Avenue  
Milton Park  
Milton Abingdon  
Oxfordshire  
OX14 4SB

**County Hall  
New Road  
Oxford  
OX1 1ND**

**Councillor Ian Hudspeth  
Leader**

Dear Sue

26 September 2019

### **Didcot Garden Town HIF, South Oxfordshire Local Plan**

As you are fully aware your Council will be making a decision on the 10th October on whether it should withdraw its currently submitted Local Plan. I wanted to take this opportunity to explain the relationship this decision has with the Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (GDT HIF) bid, and the potential impact the decision will have on Southern Oxfordshire, including both South Oxfordshire, the Vale of White Horse and Oxfordshire residents as a whole.

Oxfordshire County Council is completely committed to securing the necessary infrastructure for Didcot and the surrounding area. The £218m DGT HIF bid provides our councils with the opportunity to address the local transport issues that our residents have long suffered. It is for this reason that this GDT HIF bid is the highest priority of all infrastructure schemes in the county.

The Didcot Garden Town HIF consists of four interdependent strategic transport infrastructure schemes:

- A4130 widening between Milton Interchange and a 'Science Bridge' including 'hybrid' cycle lanes & segregated pedestrian path
- 'A Science Bridge' from the A4130 over the railway and Milton Road through the former Didcot A site; including 'hybrid' cycle lanes & segregated pedestrian path
- A Didcot to Culham River Crossing, providing a new road link between the A4130 north to the A415; including 'hybrid' cycle lanes & segregated pedestrian path
- A Clifton Hampden Bypass west of Clifton Hampden village; including a segregated cycle & pedestrian path.

All four schemes will provide significant improvements in accessibility, benefiting residents across southern Oxfordshire.

Officers are currently negotiating the DGT HIF contract with Homes England, and the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG). As you would expect the County Council needs to ensure it can meet the conditions within the contract, which I'm confident we will be able to do. However, regardless of the County Council's position this is a competitive process and Homes England must be assured that the infrastructure will support the necessary level of housing. A key condition before Homes England and MHCLG are willing to sign the contract is that South Oxfordshire has a submitted Local Plan. I must stress this is not the County Council's condition, and I appreciate your democratic right to make a decision on your Local Plan.

Your Council has recently received two letters from both Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP and Tom Walker, Director General for Growth and Devolution at MHCLG. Both stating the risk that Oxfordshire will lose the DGT HIF funding if the South Oxfordshire Local Plan is withdrawn from the examination process. It is also clear from this correspondence that Government would be less inclined to provide local infrastructure funding, both now and in the future, should local decisions undermine the Oxfordshire joint working framework established to date.

I have been involved in transport and infrastructure funding at the County Council for the past 12 years and I have never seen the level of funding we have obtained over the last 2 years by all 6 councils working in partnership. I know that there has been an historic deficit that needs to be addressed however history suggests that Government's of all political colours have not delivered the infrastructure funding.

It is my obligation as Leader of the County Council to ensure you're are fully aware of the consequences if your Council decides to remove its Local Plan from the examination process, thereby jeopardising the £218m much needed infrastructure required for residents.

This is essential infrastructure required now. Given existing growth, including many historical speculative sites, there has been a worsening of the highway network. Without this funding we cannot deliver the infrastructure needed to improve the network and the County Council will be forced into a position of objecting to any development, including commercial, significantly impacting on our collective ability to provide much needed new homes and jobs.

The most immediate impact will be felt in Vale of White Horse where Oxfordshire County Council will be obligated to object to future development that will put the Council's 5 Year Land Supply at risk. South Oxfordshire District Council is already dealing with speculative development and this will increase with significant threats of appeals, and development without any funding towards necessary infrastructure. The consequence of which South Oxfordshire residents know only too well.

I recognise that you have concerns about the submitted South Oxfordshire Local Plan, but against the potential to disrupt the DGT HIF and other transport infrastructure funding, (the costs of undertaking further Local Plan work, implications for the Vale of White Horse housing targets and consequences for further joint working across the county) I think the Local Plan must be allowed to progress as envisaged in March 2019.

On 18<sup>th</sup> July, your Council voted in support for DGT HIF and the infrastructure projects that could be delivered by it. For the reasons outlined above, voting to withdraw the Local Plan will be in contradiction to this motion. I appreciate the difficult position you are in, but I ask you to accept that the Local Plan must progress and vote to support the Local Plan Examination.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information my mobile is 07956 270318.

Yours sincerely



Ian Hudspeth  
**Leader**

Email: [Ian.Hudspeth@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Hudspeth@oxfordshire.gov.uk) [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)