

# Didcot, Oxfordshire

Expression of Interest for the location  
of Great British Railway's HQ

16 March 2022



**Great British  
Railways**  
TRANSITION TEAM



**South Oxfordshire**  
District Council

Listening Learning Leading



**Vale  
of White Horse**  
District Council



**Contents**

1. Introduction..... 1

Context..... 1

The proposed site – Didcot Gateway ..... 2

Why Didcot? ..... 2

2. Alignment to Levelling Up objectives ..... 5

Didcot Garden Town..... 5

3. Connected and easy to get to..... 6

Rail services ..... 6

Bus Connectivity ..... 8

Walking and Cycling Connectivity ..... 9

Connectivity to the Didcot Gateway site..... 10

4. Opportunities for Great British Railways ..... 10

Engagement with customers, the private sector and wider transport industry..... 10

Opportunities for working with the rail supply chain, manufacturing hubs and institutes ..... 10

Collaboration with retail, economic and environmental sectors..... 11

Benefits of Didcot Gateway for the development of GBR ..... 11

5. Railway heritage and links to the network..... 12

6. Value for money ..... 13

How Didcot Gateway offers financial efficiency to Great British Railways, enabling good use of public money and reduced costs..... 13

How Didcot Gateway generates public value including economic, social and environmental impacts ..... 13

7. Public support..... 14

The material included in this bid has been produced and collated by SODC, VoWHDC and partners unless otherwise stated and sourced.

This bid has been prepared by



Listening Learning Leading



In partnership with





**Councillor David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council:**

*“It could be argued that the railway is the heart and soul of Didcot. We think the town is an ideal location for the new public body to be situated and the sustainable public transport links we have in our garden town plans will be reflected in our bid. It will show our commitment to build on our railway heritage as well as demonstrate our future plans to help regenerate the town and create more jobs for residents living in and around the garden town.”*



**Councillor Emily Smith, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council:**

*“Didcot would be an excellent choice for the new Great British Railways national headquarters and the town has much to offer with its links to Brunel and the country’s railway history. Looking to the future, the location is in the heart of the Science Vale, which shows how we can support organisations of any size from small start-ups to world-renowned space and life science organisations and world leading engineering companies in our districts.”*



## 1. Introduction

### Context

Didcot is a railway town in South Oxfordshire, located 15 miles south of Oxford and 15 miles north-west of Reading. It is noted for its railway heritage following the opening of Didcot Railway Station as a junction station on the Great Western Railway (GWR) main line between London and Bristol in 1844. The decision to branch a line off the London to Bristol line from Didcot to Oxford meant that a rural village was destined to become an important regional hub. The grand 19th century vision, and the choices made to implement it, have strongly shaped Didcot into what it is today.

The railway has had a significant impact on the town, which has grown out from the station since its opening. Didcot, and the railway itself, is considered

the gateway to the Science Vale, which is home to three large science and technology centres (Milton Park, Culham Science Centre and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus). [OxLEPs Local Industrial Strategy](#) sets out Oxfordshire's economic strengths which GBR would be able to benefit from in the form of a highly skilled and specialised workforce and access to leading technology and innovation.

The area operates on a global scale, although there still remain challenges for Didcot as a town. To address these and realise Didcot's potential, Didcot was awarded Garden Town status in 2015, which encourages locally-led and ambitious proposals, underpinned by high quality and good design, for new communities that work as self-sustaining places.

Key to achieving success through the delivery of Didcot Garden Town (DGT) and wider Science Vale objectives is effective collaborative partnership working and optimising the opportunities to level up Didcot, so it achieves the same economic, social and

environmental success as the wider area, which in turn is critical to the success of the wider area. Where these aspirations align is on the Didcot Gateway site, which is identified as a key project in the DGT Delivery Plan.

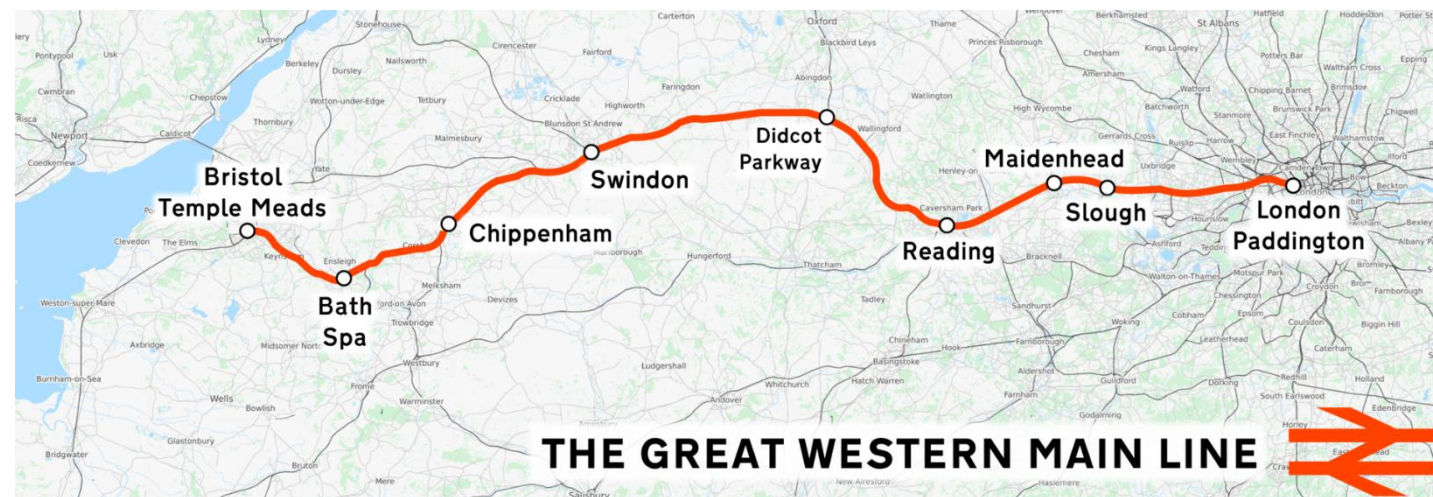
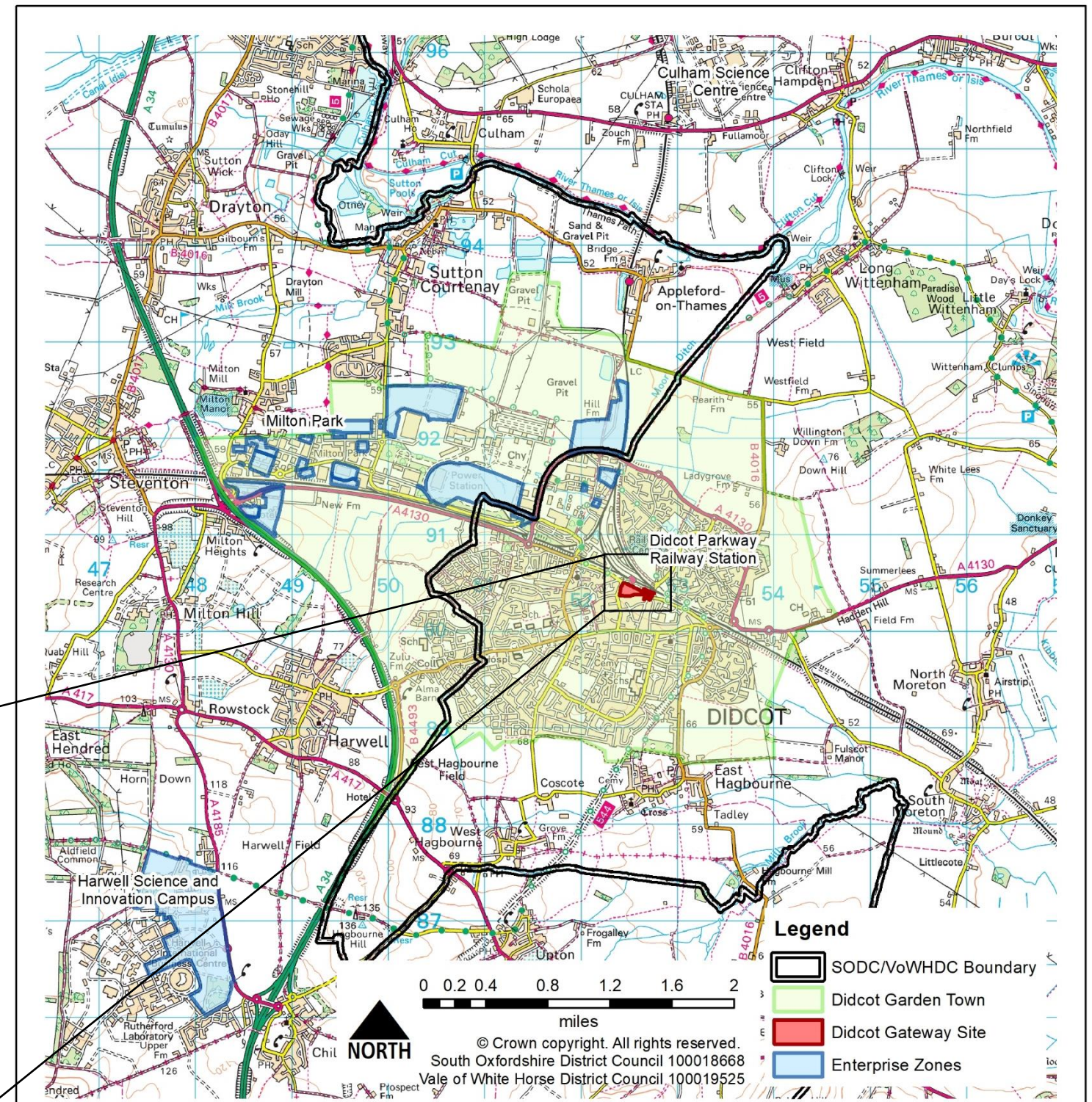


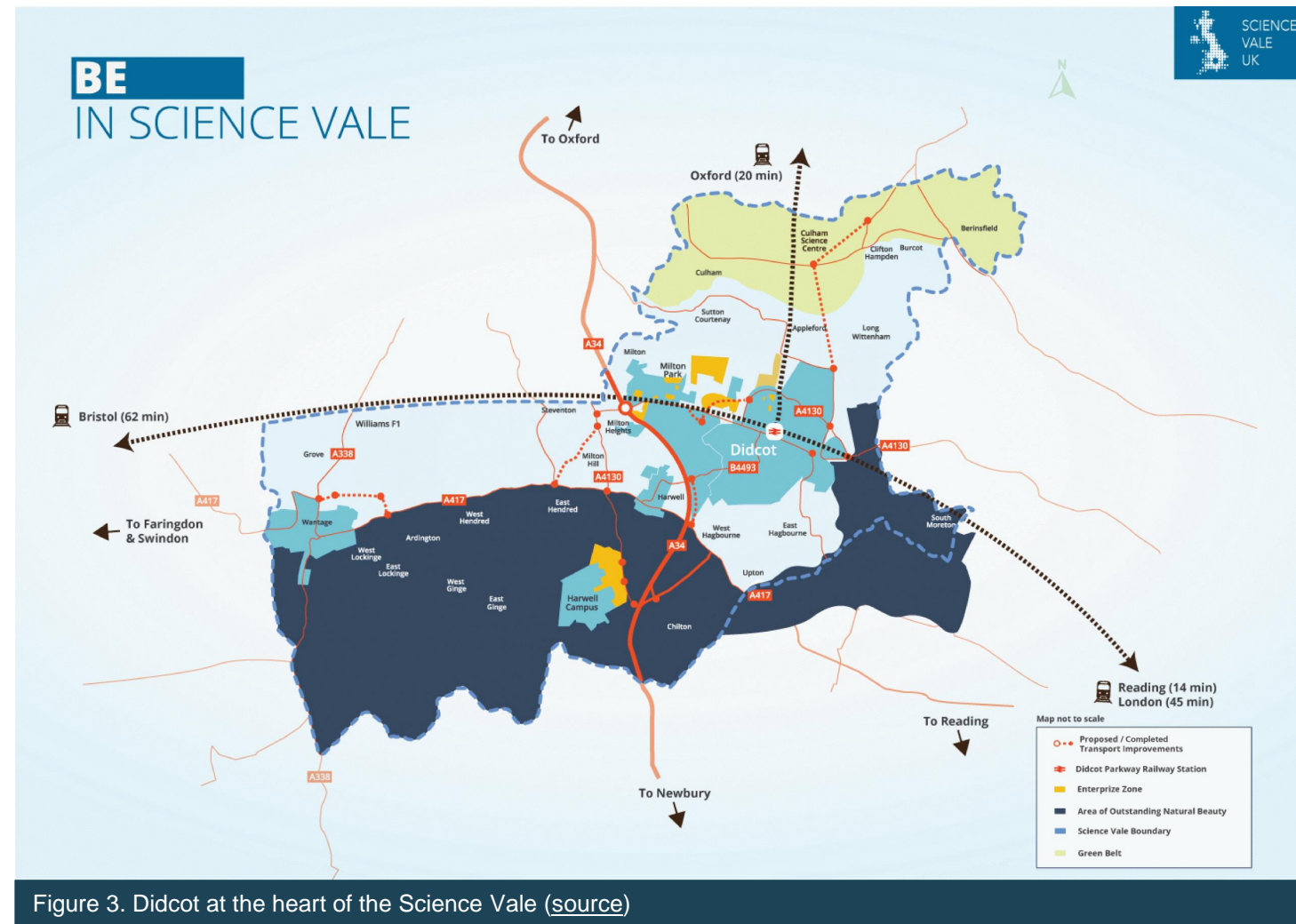
Figure 1. The Great Western Main Line (source)



Figure 2. Didcot context, including aerial and OS extracts of DPRS and the Didcot Gateway site







### The proposed site – Didcot Gateway

The Didcot Gateway site is directly opposite Didcot Parkway Railway Station (DPRS). It is almost exclusively within public control, with existing uses including temporary parking, office space, a nursery, a public house and underutilised areas. Development of the site will be critical for the wider regeneration of Didcot, which is supported by local residents and led to the allocation of the Didcot Gateway site in SODC's adopted Local Plan 2035.

SODC is bringing forward a masterplan for mixed-use redevelopment of the site which will enable landowner planning applications for individual areas. The area identified for the new headquarters location is within SODC's ownership, directly opposite the station and actively being promoted by SODC for office use.

SODC is currently nearing the end of RIBA Stage 3 design work and is preparing a full planning application for a highly sustainable 5-storey office building of approximately 5,000sqm. The office will

include around 2,100sqm space for the council and 2,900sqm for commercial tenants. This will satisfy the councils' own corporate requirements and create space for third parties to locate in Didcot to support regeneration of the town. This provides a great opportunity for effective co-location of public services in a highly sustainable building and location to accommodate GBR's requirements.

### Why Didcot?

Didcot faces a number of economic, social and environmental challenges despite its proximity to world-class sectors, science and innovation campuses, universities and businesses in the highly performing Science Vale. This is reflected in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), and partnership working, through DGT and the location of the headquarters in Didcot, will help address these challenges, enhance existing railway heritage and level up Didcot.







Figure 6. Emerging Didcot Gateway masterplan with the proposed office at the heart of the scheme, directly opposite the DPRS forecourt



An architectural rendering of a multi-story brick building, identified by a vertical sign as 'GATEWAY HOUSE'. The building features a mix of red brick and a section with a green wall. It has numerous windows, some with dark frames, and a flat roof with a dark metal railing. In the foreground, there are trees, a sidewalk with people, and a street with a car. The sky is blue with white clouds.

The floor plan shows the following rooms and their areas:

- Council Reception: 91 m<sup>2</sup>
- Interview Room 01: 9 m<sup>2</sup>
- Interview Room 02: 9 m<sup>2</sup>
- Interview Room 03: 9 m<sup>2</sup>
- Cash Office: 1 m<sup>2</sup>
- Lobby: 7 m<sup>2</sup>
- WCs: 13 m<sup>2</sup>
- Post: 5 m<sup>2</sup>
- Store - EHL: 11 m<sup>2</sup>
- Stair 01: 27 m<sup>2</sup>
- Corridor: 25 m<sup>2</sup>
- Switch Room: 12 m<sup>2</sup>
- Acc. WC: 3 m<sup>2</sup>
- Cleaners room: 3 m<sup>2</sup>
- Drying Room: 7 m<sup>2</sup>
- External Maintenance Store: 10 m<sup>2</sup>
- Corridor: 31 m<sup>2</sup>
- Archive: 27 m<sup>2</sup>
- Stair: 28 m<sup>2</sup>
- Plant Room: 26 m<sup>2</sup>
- Coffee Shop: 52 m<sup>2</sup>
- WCs: 28 m<sup>2</sup>
- Acc. WC: 3 m<sup>2</sup>
- Corridor: 81 m<sup>2</sup>
- Teapoint: 1 m<sup>2</sup>
- Store: 3 m<sup>2</sup>
- Multi Functional Space: 17 m<sup>2</sup>
- MFS Store: 3 m<sup>2</sup>
- MFS Store: 3 m<sup>2</sup>
- MFS Store: 3 m<sup>2</sup>
- MFS Store: 3 m<sup>2</sup>
- Touchdown: 13 m<sup>2</sup>
- Touchdown: 11 m<sup>2</sup>
- Meeting Room 01: 19 m<sup>2</sup>
- Meeting Room 02: 19 m<sup>2</sup>
- Meeting Room 03: 30 m<sup>2</sup>
- Stair: 25 m<sup>2</sup>

Figures 9-11. Indicative office building design; 9: roof top space and PV; 10: view from western edge; 11: view from rear (note: commercially sensitive at time of submission)



## 2. Alignment to Levelling Up objectives

The latest IMD 2019 provide a robust baseline to understand the level of deprivation in Didcot relative to Oxfordshire and the rest of the country. The IMD show that some neighbourhoods in Didcot are amongst the more deprived communities in England for the following measures, with some indices falling within the 10% most deprived in the country:

- Income deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Education, skills and training deprivation
- Barriers to housing and services
- Living environment deprivation
- Health deprivation and disability

As of February 2021, 4,677 people had been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), with 5-6% of the total number of CEV residents in SODC based in Didcot South.

These measures demonstrate the potential for Didcot to be caught in a vicious cycle with negative implications on social and human capital, as defined by the [Government's Levelling Up Capitals Framework](#), potentially leading to worse productivity, quality of life, place and leadership outcomes.

### Didcot Garden Town

To address and avoid negative outcomes, SODC and Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWHDC) are actively working with partners to improve the situation for Didcot and deliver effective synergies with other Levelling Up initiatives, for instance, through the Garden Town programme.

The Garden Town structure enables collaborative working between key stakeholders, bringing together Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) with the district, town and parish councils, the LEP, Homes England, businesses and residents. This collaboration presents an opportunity to regain collective ownership of the town and build a strong sense of place for residents, which is fundamental to underpin the DGT vision and principles and align with Levelling Up objectives.

With an estimated population growth rate of 41% (36,400 to 51,400) in Didcot, development and regeneration of the area to create access to jobs and affordability of housing is vital to address deprivation and improve residents' lives.

DGT established a number of priority projects through the [DGT Delivery Plan](#) to achieve the vision for Didcot, including work to improve the Didcot Gateway site and area around DPRS.

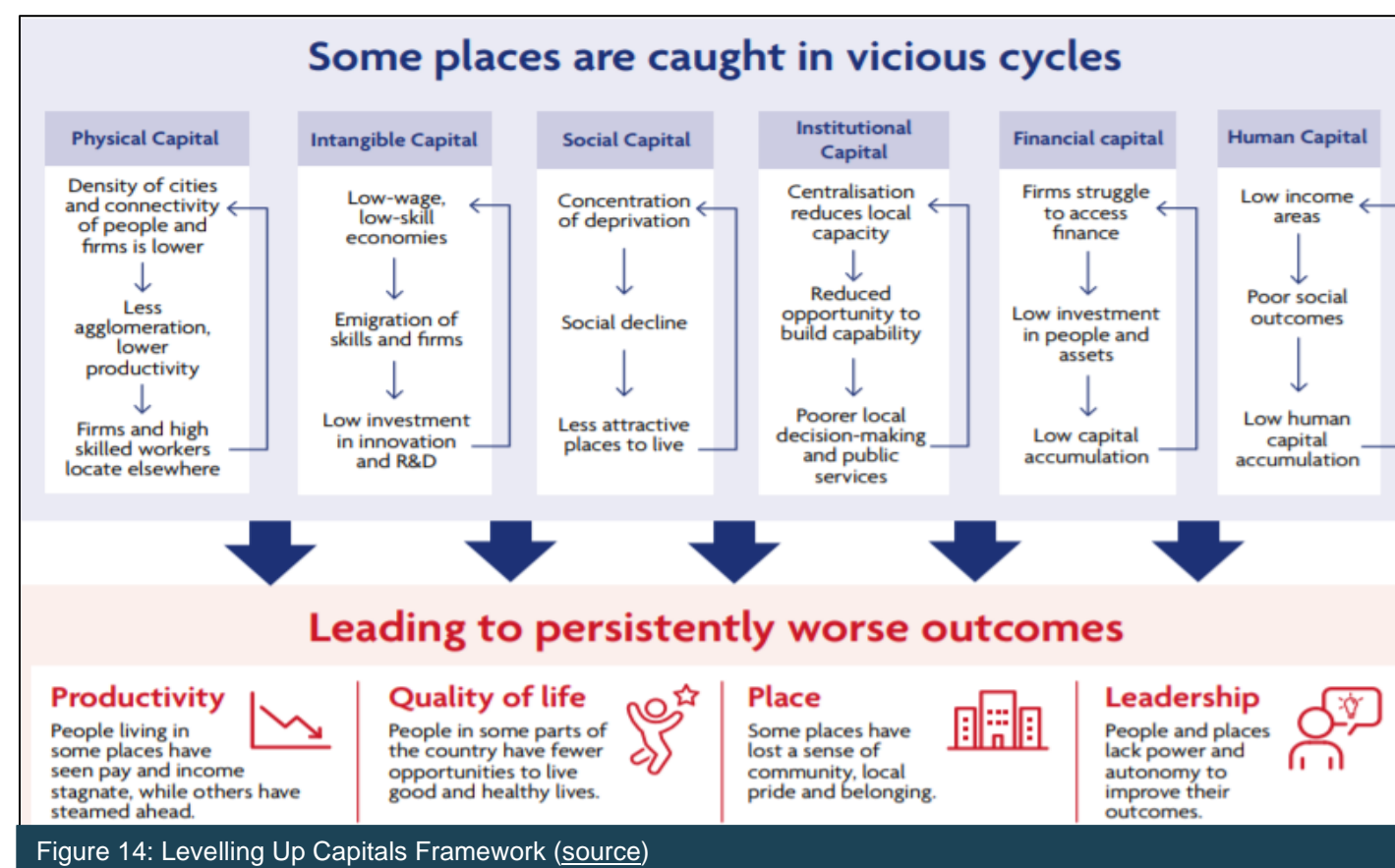


Figure 14: Levelling Up Capitals Framework ([source](#))

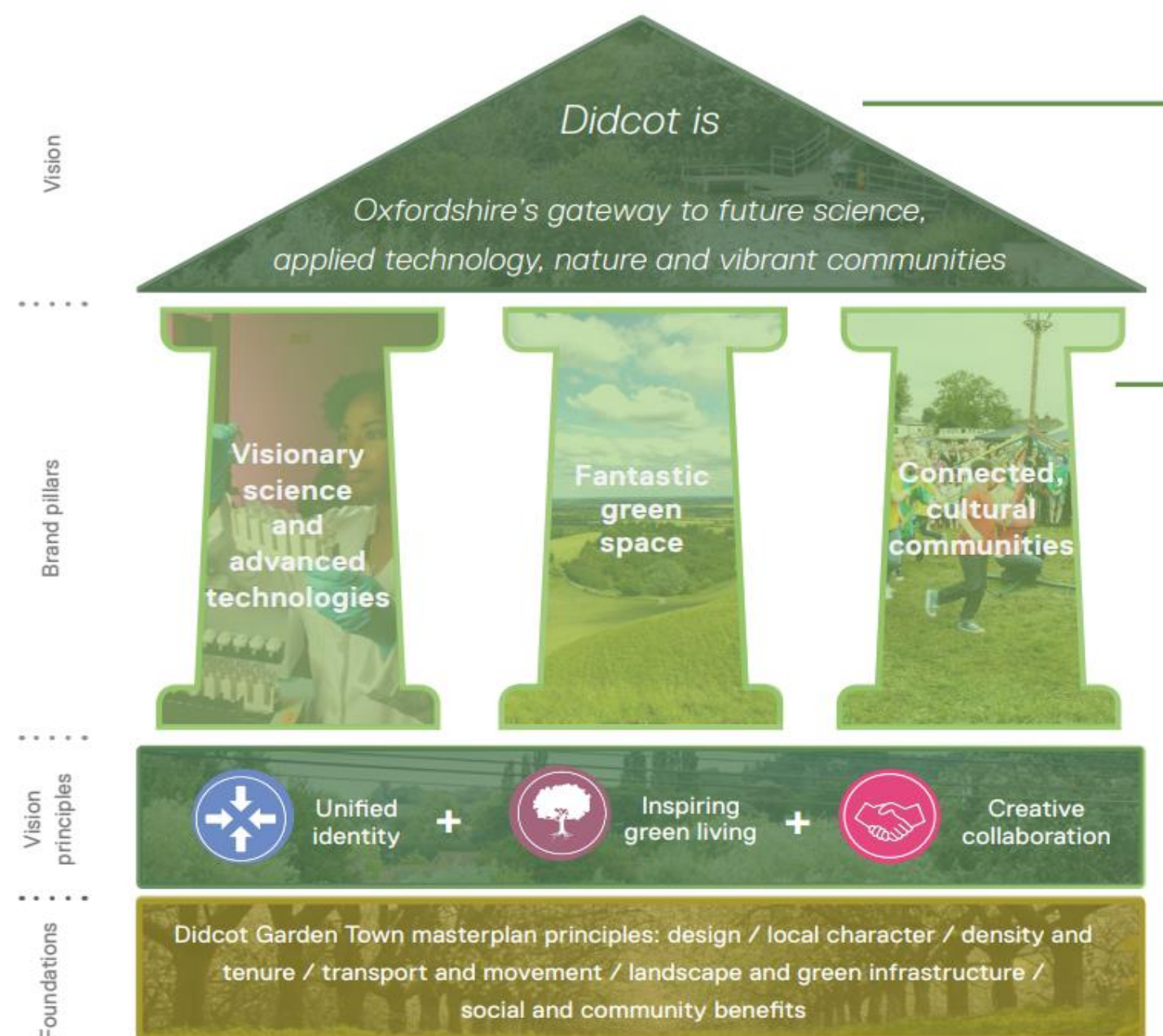


Figure 15: Didcot Garden Town vision and principles ([source](#))

Regenerating Didcot Gateway is critical to help develop a sense of place that has been lacking for many years due to the poor state of vacant and underutilised land. Improving the area was a key outcome of engagement on proposals for the Didcot Gateway site undertaken in July 2020, with the majority of respondents stating they are unhappy the site has been left to deteriorate over a number of years and want something to be done.

The council has committed to driving forward regeneration by locating its own headquarters on the site to deliver mixed-use development in accordance with the Local Plan housing allocation and a site wide masterplan.

There would be an opportunity for GBR to work with the council and DGT Advisory Board and officer team to directly impact Didcot and help deliver positive outcomes for the town.

Locating the GBR headquarters in Didcot would help address the IMD in the town and deliver against Levelling Up opportunities, creating the following benefits:

- boosting productivity, pay, jobs, and living standards by investing in the area, building upon the strong rail heritage and working collaboratively with partners, including public sector bodies, the private sector, community groups and residents



### 3. Connected and easy to get to

- spreading opportunities and improving public services, increasing the already important railway influence in the centre of Didcot, strengthening the heart of DGT and gateway to the Science Vale, addressing regional disparities and assisting in progressing Levelling Up objectives nationally
- restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging where it has been lost in the Didcot Gateway site and wider town of Didcot
- instilling and increasing confidence in the area and raising the profile of the town, working with local leaders and communities to strengthen the existing local agency
- focussing a tailored and locally-led response to regeneration and economic development of Didcot in the context of DGT and the railway heritage, as supported by [Oxfordshire's Economic Recovery Plan](#)
- meeting the objectives of the Places for Growth Programme by decentralising non-departmental public bodies out of London, but still within reach of the capital and rest of the country

SODC, VoWHDC and OCC individually declared a climate emergency in 2019. The councils are committed to achieving a net-zero transport network by 2040 and these targets are outlined further in OCC's [emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#). Critical to achieving these goals is to make sustainable travel options the natural choice by:

- promoting walking and cycling
- investing in our strategic public transport networks and the provision of better and quicker rail and bus services
- improving multi-modal travel, including the development of mobility hubs
- improving digital connectivity
- supporting transport innovations that will help us to make walking, cycling, public and shared transport more attractive

Employees, visitors, and customers will benefit from better connected and more sustainable travel options that will build upon the existing multi-modal travel offer.



Figure 16: A GWR Class 800 arriving at DPRS from Swansea ([source](#))

### Rail services

DPRS is one of the best-connected stations in the country and the second busiest station in Oxfordshire by passenger volume. Employees and visitors will be able to easily access the GBR headquarters at the Gateway site by making use of the excellent rail and sustainable transport connectivity to Didcot.

Didcot's rail connections include frequent services to Oxford to the north, Reading and London to the east and Bristol and South Wales to the west. Opportunities for easy connections at Oxford make strategic locations, such as Birmingham, Manchester and other cities in the Midlands and north, highly accessible.

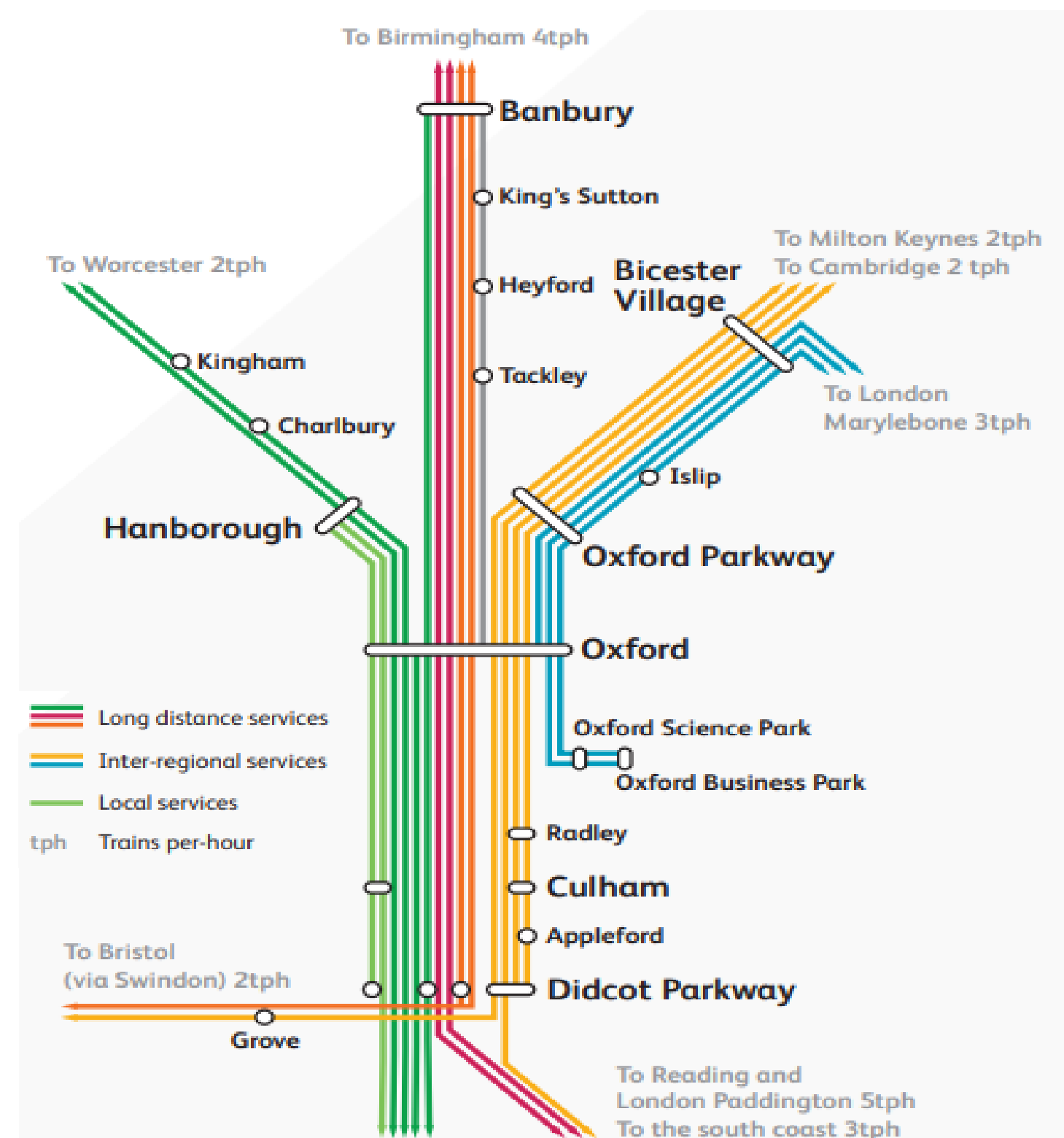


Figure 17: Connectivity at DPRS as part of Oxford Rail Corridor ([source](#))



DPRS serves a large proportion of the population living in SODC and VoWHDC, acting as the primary station and key railhead for the towns of Didcot, Abingdon, Wallingford and Wantage, and surrounding villages. For this reason, passenger journey growth has increased significantly over the past fifteen years as the population of Didcot and the surrounding area continues to grow; almost 3.5 million passenger journeys were made through Didcot in 2020 despite the impact of Covid-19.

Didcot is an important location on Network Rail's Oxfordshire Rail Corridor (ORC) and functions as a strategic hub for local, regional and national passenger and freight services, making it a vital corridor between the north and south of the country.

The [2021 ORC Study](#) (ORCS) identified that the rail network in Oxfordshire can support jobs, housing and economic growth through improvements to increase the attractiveness of rail. The strategy identifies key opportunities to improve connectivity to Didcot, expanding services, connections and routes to inter-regional economic hubs and beyond.

The ORCS specifically identifies the opportunity to operate additional services direct from Milton Keynes to Didcot from 2024 once the next section of East West Rail is delivered (alongside improvements at Oxford), as well as longer-term service linkages to/from Bristol and Cambridge.

Oxfordshire authorities will continue to work in partnership with the rail industry and other partners such as the sub-national transport bodies (England's Economic Heartland and Western Gateway) to plan for these improvements, including through the newly formed East West Mainline Partnership. These initiatives will ensure Oxfordshire (including Didcot) will be better connected by rail than now, with new direct linkages opened up to the east and west of the country.

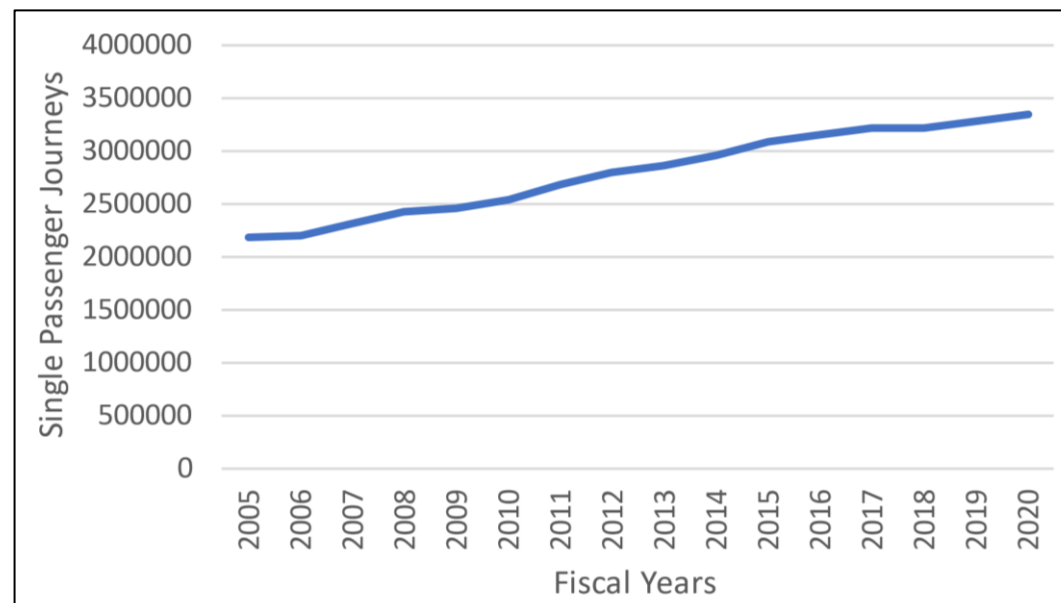


Figure 18: Didcot Passenger Journey Growth since 2005



Figure 19: The Flying Scotsman visits Didcot Railway Centre

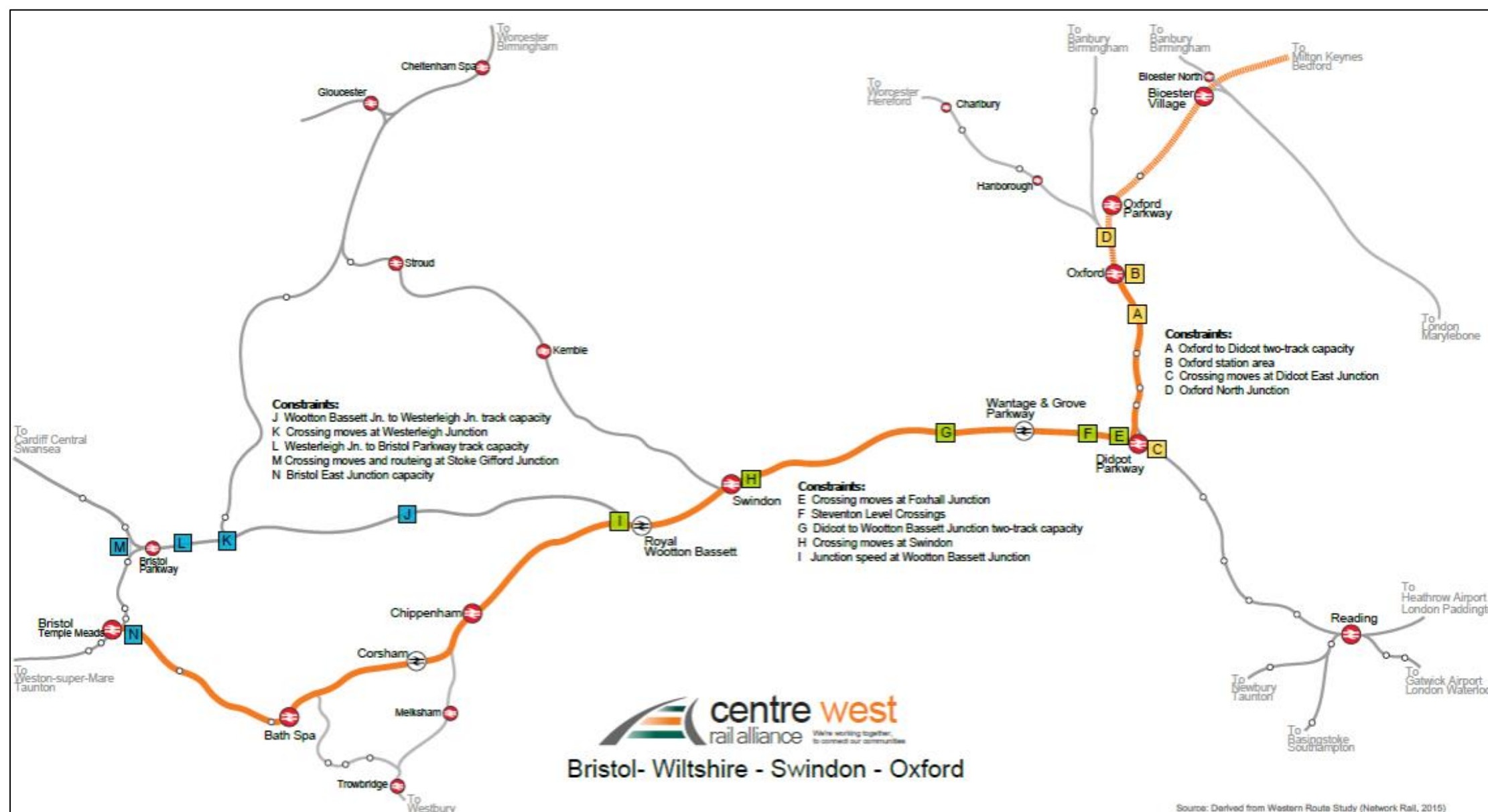


Figure 20: Potential Centre West Rail Alliance Network, showing rail route constraints and initiatives on the east-west corridor



Route	Daytime (weekday) frequency
London Paddington – Reading - Didcot Parkway – Swindon – Gloucester – Cheltenham Spa	1 train per hour
London Paddington – Reading – Didcot Parkway – Bath Spa – Bristol Temple Meads	2 trains per hour
Reading – Tilehurst – Pangbourne – Goring & Streatley – Cholsey – Didcot Parkway	2 trains per hour
Didcot Parkway – Oxford	2 trains per hour
Didcot Parkway – Oxford (Via Culham)	2 trains per hour (commuter), 1 train per hour (rest of day)
Didcot Parkway (Via Reading) – Maidenhead – Slough – Ealing Broadway – London Paddington	2 trains per hour
Didcot Parkway – Swindon – Bath Spa – Bristol – Newport – Cardiff Central	2 trains per hour
Didcot Parkway – Swindon – Bath Spa – Bristol – Newport – Cardiff Centre – Swansea – Carmarthen	1 train per hour

Figure 21. Rail connections (routes and frequency) at DPRS

Service	Route	Daytime frequency
33	Abingdon – Didcot – Wallingford	30 mins to Wallingford – 60 mins to Abingdon
90	Didcot Town Service (Tesco)	20 mins
91	Didcot Town Service (Ladygrove)	60 mins
92	Didcot Town Service (South Didcot)	60 mins
94	Harwell Campus – Didcot	90 mins
97	Great Western Park (South) – Didcot	30 mins
98	Harwell Campus – Great Western Park (North) – Didcot	15 mins to Great Western Park – 30 mins to Harwell Campus
99A/99C	Didcot – Milton Park – Great Western Park (North) circular	60 mins each route
X2	Didcot – Abingdon – Oxford	20 mins
X32	JR Hospital – Oxford – Didcot – Harwell Campus – Wantage	30 mins
X36	Wantage – Grove – Didcot – Nobel Park	30 mins

Figure 22. Bus services (routes and frequency) at DPRS

Bus Connectivity

DPRS has frequent bus services operating to the station from a wide range of destinations across Science Vale. It is a major rail-bus-cycle interchange, with four bus-stands on the forecourt, remodelled in 2014 to improve capacity and the passenger environment, with a total of eleven regular routes providing frequent links to the hinterland of both the town itself and a wider rural area.

At present, around 16,000 people board bus services from DPRS each week, which represents a reduced level of patronage following Covid-19, although this is expected to rise to around 30,000/week.

Didcot’s role as a strategic railhead is reflected in the level of bus service connectivity – there are regular services to/from Didcot and Abingdon, Wantage and Wallingford.

The town’s location at the heart of Science Vale means that excellent connections to the major science and employment sites are available, with up to ten buses per hour to Milton Park and five per hour to Harwell Campus.

As one of the UK's fastest-growing Garden Towns, Didcot’s bus network is consistently evolving to meet the increased demand for travel. It is expected that even greater connectivity will be delivered as further expansion of the town takes place over the next decade. OCC has published a [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) outlining ambitions to further improve public transport connectivity and seek partnerships with other transport bodies and the private sector. This includes a potential ‘Travel Hub’ at Harwell Campus, which would be the first Oxfordshire Mobility Hub and would facilitate new connections between Newbury–Harwell–Oxford, including connections to Milton Park and DPRS.

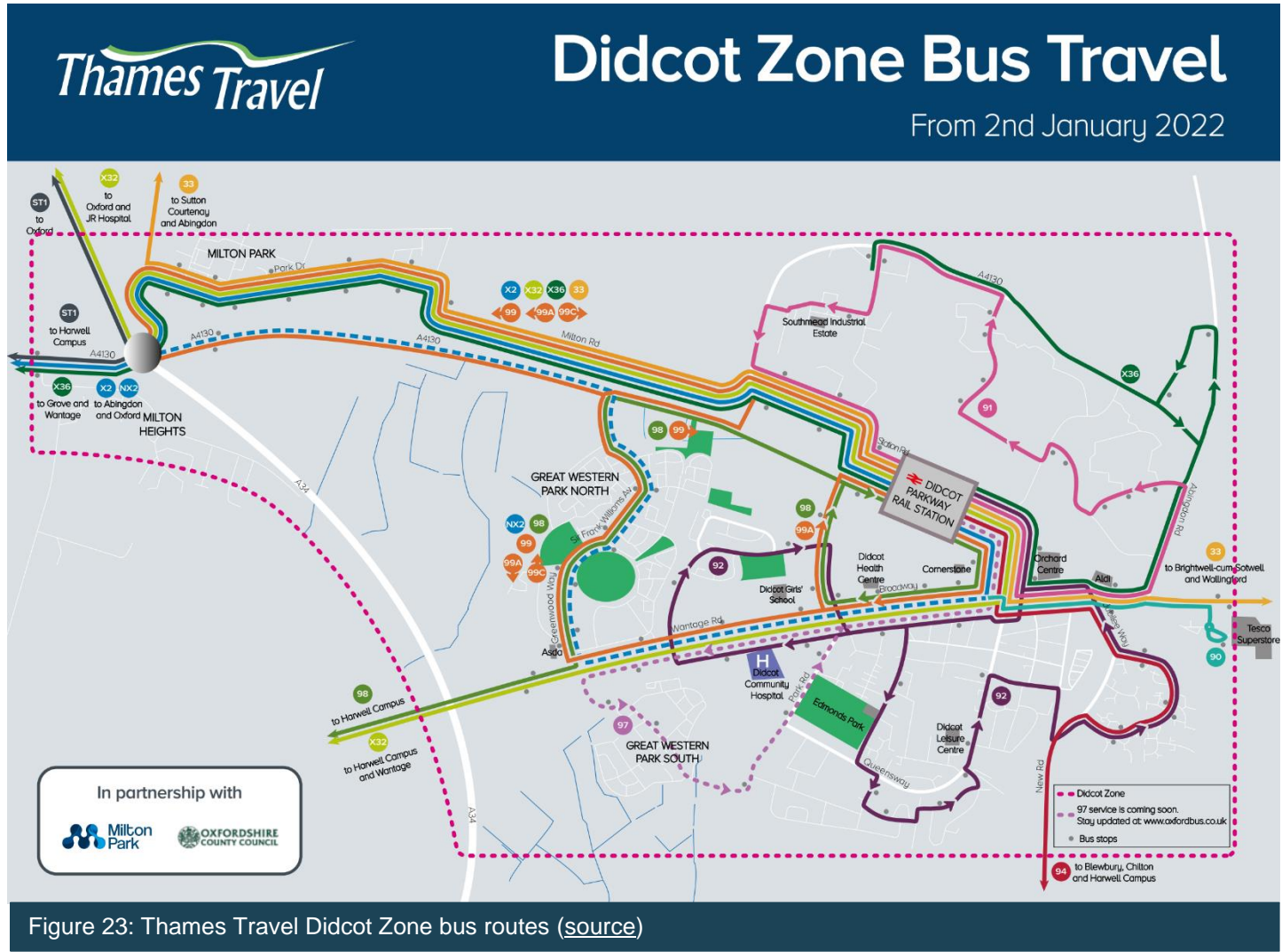


Figure 23: Thames Travel Didcot Zone bus routes (source)



### Walking and Cycling Connectivity

First and last mile connections are critical to support more sustainable multi-modal journeys. DPRS is well connected to the cycling network; National Cycle Route 5 (a 366-mile route from Reading to Anglesey in Wales, via Wallingford, Oxford, Birmingham and Chester) passes immediately in front of the station (and Didcot Gateway site), providing a safe route for cyclists travelling from local villages and towns. The station is also the starting point of cycle route 544, a 12-mile route on quiet roads, byways and purpose-built paths, which connects Didcot with Harwell Campus, Wantage and The Ridgeway historic national trail.

Didcot is also connected to the surrounding local area by the Science Vale Cycle Network (SVCN). This delivers cycle and pedestrian routes from DPRS to the three main employment centres at Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre and the expanding urban residential centres of Didcot, Abingdon and Wantage within Science Vale.

Ongoing work to support walking and cycling includes an emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the Didcot area which will identify route enhancements for links to the station for future investment. A Strategic Cycling Network is also being produced for the whole county which will focus on connections between key urban areas and build upon the approach adopted by the SVCN.

Significant, safe bicycle storage to encourage end-to-end sustainable modes of transport has recently been developed at DPRS.

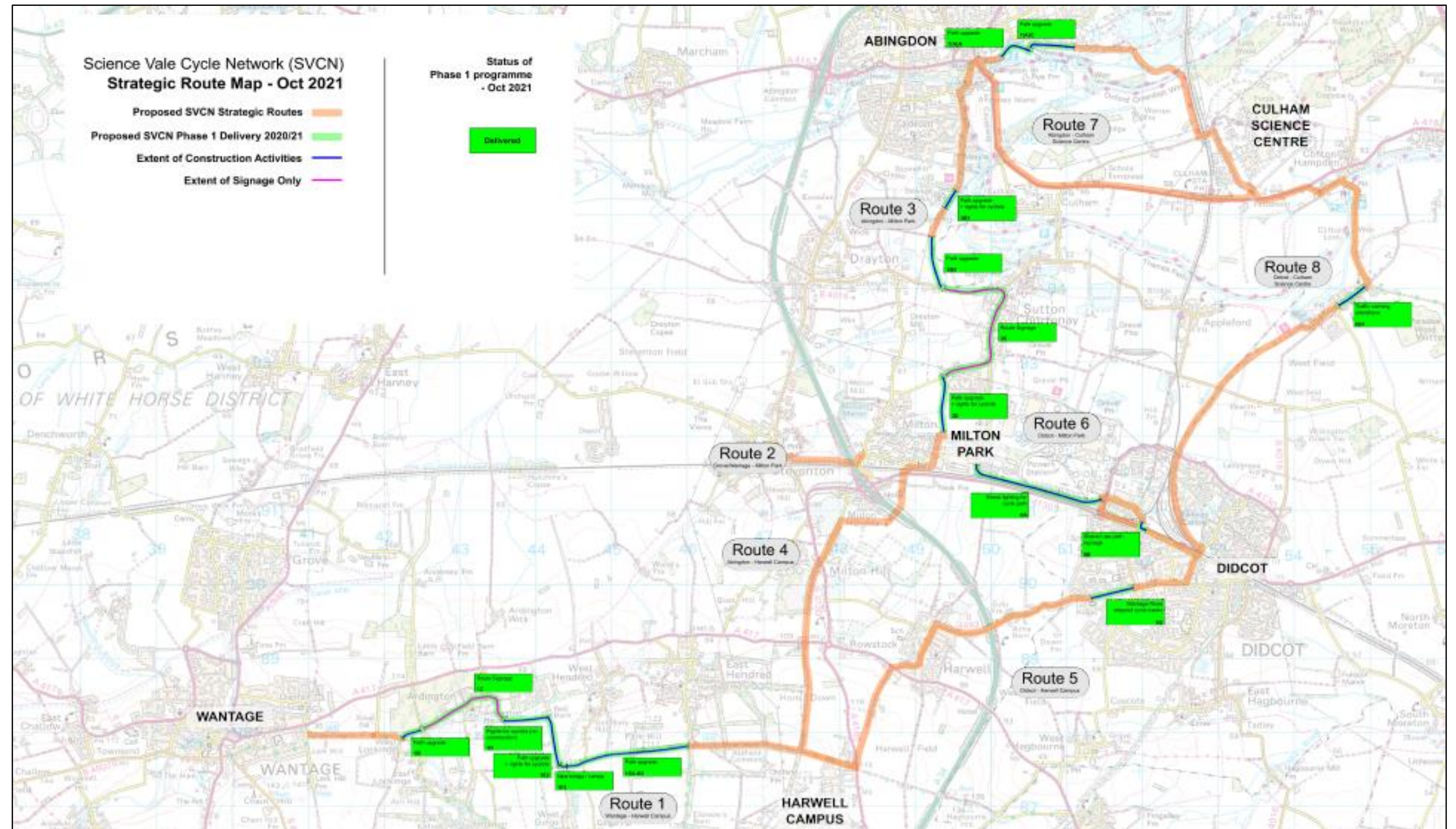


Figure 24: Science Vale Cycle Network strategic routes ([source](#))



Figure 25: DPRS 600 bike capacity cycle hub adjacent to station forecourt ([source](#))



Figure 26: Free bike and ebike hire at DPRS cycle hub ([source](#))



Figures 27-28: Improved sustainable transport connectivity and public realm environment for the area opposite the station (including Gateway offices) as proposed in emerging Didcot Gateway illustrative masterplan





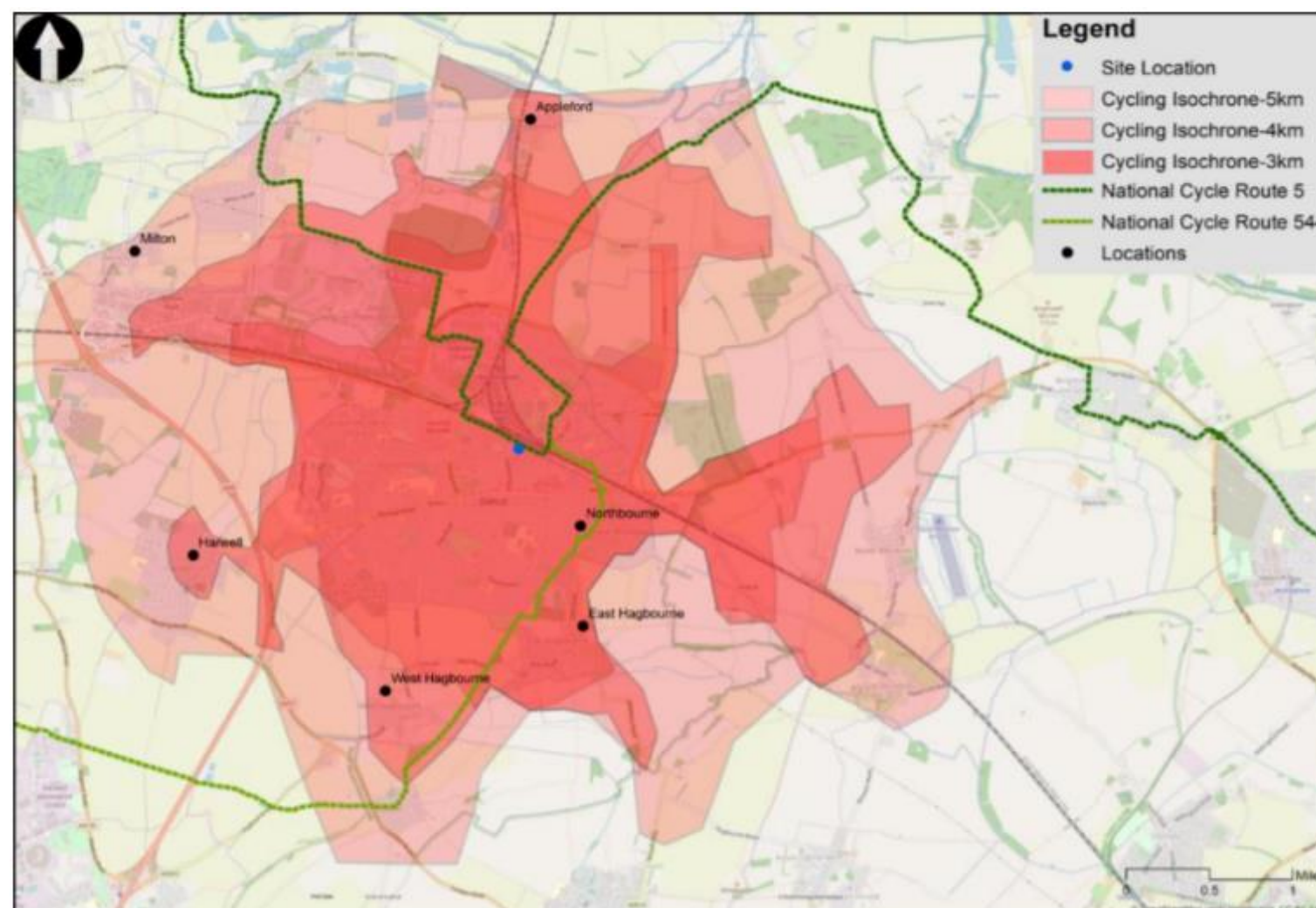


Figure 29: 5km cycling distance isochrone from the Didcot Gateway site (source)

#### Connectivity to the Didcot Gateway site

The Didcot Gateway site offers quick and easy pedestrian access from the station, with a short 0.4 mile walk into the centre of Didcot. Pedestrian facilities and footways alongside the station and towards the town centre are wide, well-paved with dropped kerbs and tactile paving at necessary points, enabling accessibility for all members of society.

Despite excellent existing connectivity, the Didcot Gateway masterplan seeks to increase sustainable transport opportunities, proposing two additional bus stops to accommodate increased bus provision, electric charging vehicle parking spaces, car-clubs, additional cycle storage, and an enhanced road and cycle network to make it a more attractive and safer environment for all, in line with Public Sector Equality Duties.

In order to optimise opportunities to improve movement and connectivity, furthering social, economic and transport objectives, the council is collaborating with:

- DGT and OCC on projects including Didcot Central Corridor, which incorporates the 'Gateway' spine running between the station and Gateway site
- Gateway site landowners
- Didcot Town Council
- rail and bus operators, including GWR, Chiltern Rail and Oxford Bus Company)
- Sustrans and community groups, for instance, the local cycling group HarBUG, and
- the public

#### 4. Opportunities for Great British Railways

*Engagement with customers, the private sector and wider transport industry*

Locating the GBR headquarters at Didcot can effectively enhance engagement with customers, the private sector and the wider industry. The local governance infrastructure is geared up to support community, and potential customer, engagement.

There is a strong network of cross-sectoral partnerships, particularly across private-public partnerships, established in Didcot that GBR will have the opportunity to link with. This includes Didcot First, established to bring together private sector partners, including rail and transport bodies, housebuilders, energy providers, science and innovation organisations and educational facilities.

Close proximity to both Science Vale and Didcot Growth Accelerator Enterprise Zones will help join up with the private sector, education and research institutions, resonating strongly with the Government's Industrial Strategy and helping GBR to leverage private sector knowledge and investment to meet its core goals.

Oxfordshire has a strong record of successful collaboration between the private sector, public sector and academia. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership has brought these entities together and they are, through shared visions and strategies, collaboratively working to steer delivery of unprecedented housing and employment growth,

ensuring a coordinated and joined up approach to improve the area for residents and businesses.

The location of the Gateway site opposite DPRS will encourage engagement with customers and offers a visible face for GBR at the gateway to the Science Vale. The office, with a café, hot-desks and meeting rooms will be a destination for flexible and customer-orientated engagement to benefit GBR.

*Opportunities for working with the rail supply chain, manufacturing hubs and institutes*

In addition to the passenger connectivity, Didcot is positioned on the rail freight route from Solent to the Midlands, which is acknowledged in the [Solent to Midlands Multimodal Freight Strategy](#) as one of the most critical freight routes in the UK. The intermodal (containerised) sector is the most dominant on this rail corridor and the second most dominant in the UK, facilitated by the route being cleared for W10 traffic.

Of particular relevance to local supply chain opportunities is the location of the DB Cargo yard at Didcot which provides modern railway services to the rail freight industry. As well as fuelling facilities for modern diesel locomotives, the yard houses locomotive and wagon maintenance depots, a marshalling yard, recess sidings and stabling and storage sidings. It is one of only two DB Cargo depots suitable for the road/rail transfer of rail vehicles.



Figure 30: All freight trains by corridor (2013; red: >15 trains/day; orange: 5-15 trains/day; yellow: 1.25-5 trains/day; green: <1.25 trains/day (source)





Figure 31: Intermodal freight trains by corridor (2013; red: >10 trains/day; yellow: 2.5-8 trains/day; green: <1-2.5 trains/day [\(source\)](#)

The strength of the freight network, alongside the rail service facilities at Didcot provides obvious opportunities to link with the rail supply chain, manufacturing hubs, and railway and engineering research, educational and professional institutions.

DPRS is well connected with the GWR headquarters in Swindon and, via Oxford, to the existing National Rail headquarters in Milton Keynes. Didcot is home to the Thames Valley Signalling Centre (TVSC), one of eleven innovative rail operating centres with signalling staff, train operating company staff and Network Rail controllers all working together to enable quick solutions to signalling problems and fewer delays to trains and passengers. TVSC is responsible for signalling trains from Paddington, all the way to the Welsh border, including Reading and Bristol.

By locating at Didcot Gateway, at the heart of the UK's world-leading science and technology cluster, GBR would have an enormous opportunity to take advantage of the emerging technology breakthroughs happening in Science Vale, in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, materials science, energy storage and quantum computing.

The location of the GBR headquarters on this network would create strong links to the rail supply chain, manufacturing hubs and institutes.

*Collaboration with retail, economic and environmental sectors*

The Didcot Gateway site is located close to the retail centre of Didcot, which includes the Orchard Centre that offers supermarkets, high-street shops, cafes and restaurants, a cinema and arts centre. The excellent local retail provision is further enhanced by the proximity by rail and bus to retail hubs including Oxford and Reading.

The location of the GBR headquarters on the Didcot Gateway site will create local, skilled public sector jobs. These jobs will help boost the economy, with staff located at the offices spending money locally and contributing to regeneration of the area.

Oxfordshire's strong science and innovation context places it highly on the national shift to zero-carbon. Strong partnerships in Oxfordshire are helping the area lead the way in adopting new, greener and more sustainable approaches to achieving net-zero, with both SODC and VoWHDC establishing ambitious net-zero targets. Being in Didcot will place GBR at the forefront of the transition to zero-carbon and, alongside other local partners, meet GBR's objectives.

*Benefits of Didcot Gateway for the development of GBR*

In addition to the above, the Didcot Gateway site will benefit the development of GBR in the following ways:

- the location enables GBR to be in a prominent sustainable position directly opposite a mainline station with a strong identity, reflecting the new organisational culture, distinct from the current Network Rail identity and supportive of GBR's core goals
- being based in the same non-branded building as SODC and VoWHDC will provide a strong public sector foundation for growth, whilst protecting the GBR brand
- in line with GBR's CSR/ESG responsibilities, GBR would have a:
  - role in regenerating and revitalising this key site, helping to deliver much needed improvement of the area and a sense of identity closely linked with the railway and railway culture
  - potential opportunity to link into future development of the Gateway site and partnership opportunities with other public sector landowners
  - high-quality building design and sustainability credentials will help GBR meet ESG aspirations and bring cost savings
  - opportunity to upskill local population to address existing IMD
- subject to understanding the precise requirements and staff compliment proposals, flexible working space within the building will enable GBR to grow and shape its offer
- touchdown and bookable meeting space in the building will encourage flexibility and enable the adoption of different working patterns based on need

- future potential growth at DPRS (e.g. the creation of a station hub with additional working space) provides adjacent potential for expansion of the headquarters and office space as required (with flexibility built into the use of the office enabling future potential to reduce space if needed)
- a readily available supply of skilled labour and railway expertise would provide opportunities to grow the business
- forthcoming housing development and growth on the site and in the wider Didcot area offers a range of accommodation for staff, enabling a good quality of life through connections to the heritage and environmental assets in the Oxfordshire area



Figure 32: A freight train at Didcot [\(source\)](#)



Figure 33: The Orchard Centre, Didcot [\(source\)](#)



## 5. Railway heritage and links to the network

Didcot's railway heritage dates back to 1844 with the opening of Didcot Station and the GWR line to Oxford. A Provender Store for all GWR's horses was built in the 1880s. The railway then influenced the siting of a depot for storing explosives in the First World War and the establishment of Vauxhall Barracks nearby.

In the 1950s the excellent rail connections were instrumental in attracting the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to Harwell and a decade later Didcot Power Station was built with its 'merry go round' trains bringing coal from the north and abroad.

Didcot's position in Science Vale, together with its transport links at DPRS and the local railway industries, make it an ideal place to develop and enhance the railway heritage.

Didcot Railway Centre (DRC) tells the story of 180 years of railway history through the eyes of a single railway company and has been the home of the Great Western Society since the 1960s. DRC is a living history museum based around the original 1930s Great Western Engine Shed and Coal Stage complex at Didcot; the only such complex of buildings still used for its original purpose of servicing steam locomotives.

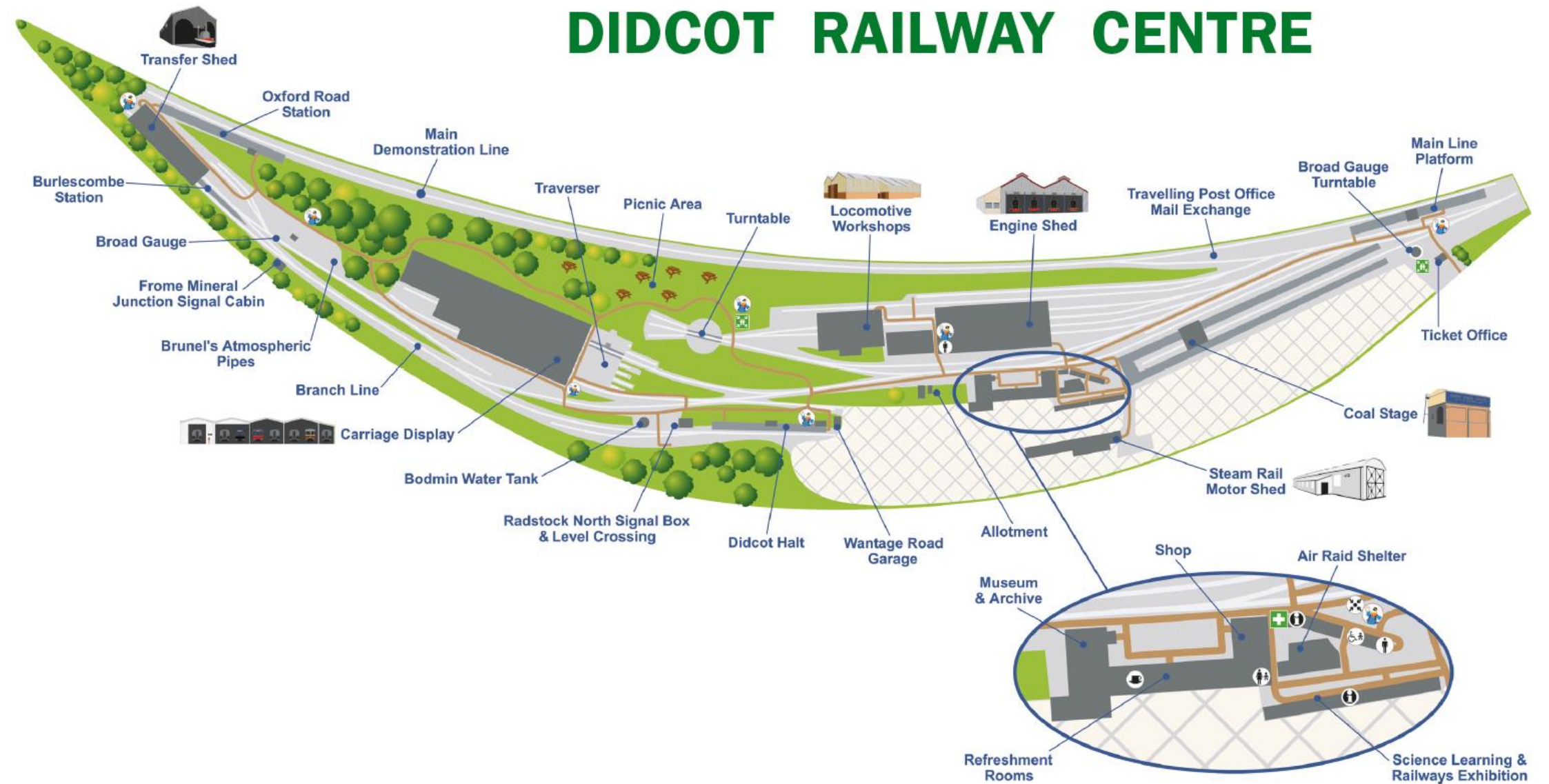


Figure 34: Didcot Railway Centre map, including associated rail infrastructure and heritage locations



Figure 35: Didcot Railway Centre coal stage



Figure 36: Aerial view of the Didcot Railway Centre engine shed