

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	24 NOVEMBER 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	12
TITLE:	GREAT WESTERN ELECTRIFICATION & READING GREEN PARK STATION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION & STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the latest position regarding Network Rail's electrification of the Great Western Mainline and implications for the proposed station at Green Park.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee note the report.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Electrification of the Great Western Mainline from London to South Wales is a committed project within Network Rail's Control Period 5 as agreed with Government, to be delivered during the period 2014-19.

4.2 Reading Green Park Station is a proposed new railway station on the Reading to Basingstoke line. Planning permission for the station has been granted and capital funding to deliver the station has been secured through the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Growth Deal and S106 private sector funding contributions.

4.3 Delivery of Green Park Station is anticipated to be complete by December 2018, to coincide with the previously committed timescales for Network Rail's electrification of the line from Southcote Junction to Basingstoke.

5. GREAT WESTERN ELECTRIFICATION & GREEN PARK STATION

5.1 The Department for Transport and Network Rail announced in June 2015 that a review of the previously committed programme of major enhancement projects for Control Period 5 (2014-19) would be undertaken by the newly appointed Chairman of Network Rail, Sir Peter Hendy. This review was required due to higher costs and longer delivery timescales associated with the programme of works than had previously been anticipated.

5.2 As part of the announcement, the Government committed to progressing delivery of electrification of the Great Western Mainline as their 'top priority' for Control Period 5. Electrification of other lines including the Midland Mainline and TransPennine Express would be 'paused', although it was subsequently announced in September that these schemes would be resumed.

5.3 Electrification of the Great Western Mainline will provide better connections between Reading and London, Newbury, Oxford, Bristol and Cardiff. In conjunction with the Intercity Express Programme a new fleet of faster, longer electric trains will provide shorter journey times and more frequent intercity services. The committed timescales prior to the Hendy Review included electrification from London to Oxford by the end of 2016 and to Cardiff by the end of 2017; however revised timescales are anticipated to be announced by Government in due course.

5.4 Electrification of the railway line between Southcote Junction and Basingstoke had been included in the final phase of Great Western electrification works, to be completed by the end of 2018. This section of electrification is vital to enable the opening of Green Park Station as the higher performance of the electric trains will allow trains to call at the new station within the current timetable for the line, which would not be possible with the diesel trains currently operating on the line without the need for an additional train.

5.5 Delivery of a new station at Green Park is a critical element of Reading's transport strategy to facilitate the proposed level of residential, commercial and leisure development on the A33 corridor (within both Reading and south of the M4 in Wokingham) by helping to alleviate significantly increased levels of congestion on the road network. The Council has therefore been seeking assurances from both the Department for Transport and Network Rail that electrification to Basingstoke will be completed as part of the Great Western works by December 2018, however to date confirmation has not been received pending the outcome of the Hendy Review.

5.6 Officers will continue to work with colleagues at Network Rail, Great Western Railway and Thames Valley Berkshire LEP to progress plans for Green Park Station to ensure the Council is in a position to take advantage of electrification of the line when timescales have been confirmed by Government.

5.7 Members of the Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

6.1 The delivery of the projects outlined in this report would help to deliver the following Corporate Plan Service Priorities:

- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active.
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 A consultation regarding Green Park Station was undertaken as part of the planning application and progress report have been submitted to Council meeting and the Berkshire Local Transport Body.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no legal implications relating to this report.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

9.2 The Council has carried out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise on all projects, and considers that the proposals do not have a direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The costs associated with the delivery of Green Park Station will be met by a combination of Thames Valley Berkshire LEP, private sector and local funding sources.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 N/A