

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 JULY 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	12
TITLE:	MAJOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS PROJECTS - UPDATE		
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on the current major transport and highways projects in Reading, namely:

- Reading Station Area Redevelopment
- Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes - Green Park Station, Reading West Station upgrade, Southern and Eastern Mass Rapid Transit, Eastern Park and Ride, National Cycle Network Route 422 and Third Thames Bridge.

1.2 This report also advises of any future key programme dates associated with the schemes.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the Committee note the report.

2.2 That the Committee provides spend approval for the revised budget for Phase 1A of the South Reading MRT scheme, and provides delegated

authority to enter into a contract based on this approval and in accordance with the Policy Committee decision 2.2 of 11 April 2016.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

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

4. THE PROPOSAL

Reading Station

Cow Lane Bridges - Highway works

- 4.1 As reported to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in various reports over the past 12 months, Network Rail identified some potential issues with the overall cost profile to deliver the Cow Lane highway project, and they discovered some potential design issues with existing utility services in the road. As a reminder to the Committee, the original cost estimates to deliver the scheme were based on utilising Network Rail's existing contractor responsible for the viaduct, who were already mobilised between the two bridges. Unfortunately, the CPO process delayed the proposed programme, and this contractor has since left site.
- 4.2 Network Rail have engaged their consultants to complete a value engineering exercise alongside the likely main contractor in order to identify potential cost savings by redesigning and reducing the scope of certain elements of the project. The Council has been involved in the review primarily to ensure the essential elements of the scheme are retained, (such as the new footway on the east side of the southern bridge). The Council remains reliant on Network Rail in confirming a programme of works, and Network Rail remain the lead organisation in delivering the project.
- 4.3 The value engineering exercise to date has identified some potential areas where the overall project scope can be reduced without affecting the overall project objectives. The main points to note relate to the pedestrian facilities to cross the road between both bridges and a subsequent new layout to include a zebra crossing (instead of a pedestrian refuge), and a request by Network Rail to close Cow Lane throughout the duration of the works, which has since been rejected by the Council.
- 4.4 Final designs will now take place by Network Rail's consultant, with a more detailed presentation of the final layout expected in September 2016. It is also likely Network Rail will be able to confirm the programme of works at this point. Officers will continue to update Members on the latest position through the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes

Green Park Station

- 4.5 Reading Green Park Station is a proposed new railway station on the Reading to Basingstoke line. The station and multi-modal interchange would significantly improve accessibility and connectivity to this area of south Reading which has large-scale development proposed including the expansion of Green Park business park, Green Park Village residential development and the proposed Royal Elm Park mixed use development.
- 4.6 The scheme was granted financial approval by the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2014, with a programmed station opening date of December 2018. Design work for the station is being progressed in partnership with Network Rail and Great Western Railway to ensure the station complies with the latest railway standards. An updated programme has been agreed between all project partners in line with the target opening date for the station of December 2018. Design work for the multi-modal interchange and surface level car park is being progressed in parallel with the station design work.
- 4.7 Discussions are on-going between the DfT and Great Western Railway regarding the availability of trains to serve the station, however the Berkshire Local Transport Body has agreed that the scheme should be progressed in line with the original programme.

Reading West Station Upgrade

- 4.8 The Council has been working with Great Western Railway and Network Rail to produce a Masterplan for significantly improved passenger facilities at Reading West Station. The proposals include accessibility improvements including lift access to the platforms from the Oxford Road and enhancements to the path from the Tilehurst Road; provision of a station building on the Oxford Road and associated interchange enhancements such as increased cycle parking; improvements within the station itself including wider platforms, longer canopies, enhanced lighting and CCTV coverage; and improvements to the entrance from Tilehurst Road including provision of a gateline and ticket machines.
- 4.9 Delivery of the scheme is split into two distinct phases, with Network Rail due to implement Phase 1 as part of their wider programme of works for electrification of the line between Southcote Junction and Newbury. Phase 2, which includes significant improvements such as the station building on the Oxford Road, is currently unfunded however officers will continue to seek funding for the scheme from all available sources, including a bid to

the Local Growth Fund which is due to be submitted to the Government in the summer.

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.10 South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed series of bus priority measures on the A33 corridor between Mere oak Park & Ride and Reading town centre. The scheme would reduce congestion and journey times, improving public transport reliability on the main growth corridor into Reading. Any proposal will not reduce existing highway capacity along the A33.
- 4.11 Phases 1 & 2 of the scheme, from M4 J11 to Island Road, were granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2015. Detailed design for Phase 1A is complete and design for Phases 1B and 2 are being finalised.
- 4.12 As agreed at Policy Committee in March 2016, Phase 1A of the scheme is due to commence on site mid July 2016 for a period of 3 months. This initial phase of works involves construction of a series of bus lanes between the A33 junction with Imperial Way and the existing bus priority provided through M4 Junction 11. The scheme is achieved predominantly by utilising space in the central reservations and realigning existing lanes where required. Any comments received during the Statutory Consultation are detailed in a separate report at this committee meeting.
- 4.13 Tenders have been returned for Phase 1A above the initial approved budget for this phase of the scheme, therefore a review of Phases 1A, 1B and 2 has been undertaken, resulting in a budget profile adjustment. The programme budget remains unchanged, however in order to ensure this phase of the scheme can be implemented we are seeking revised spend approval for Phase 1A.
- 4.14 In addition, options for future phases of the South MRT scheme are currently being investigated to provide further bus priority measures between Island Road and Reading town centre. Phases 3 and 4 of the scheme have been ranked as the highest priority transport scheme in Berkshire for future funding from the Local Growth Fund.

East Reading Park & Ride and Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.15 East Reading Park & Ride (P&R) is a proposed park and ride facility off the A3290 and East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed public transport link between central Reading and the park and ride site, running parallel to the Great Western mainline.

- 4.16 The schemes were granted indicative funding approval in July 2014 and financial approval will be sought from the Berkshire Local Transport Body when the full business case for each scheme has been prepared.
- 4.17 A consultation was undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council during November 2015 regarding the P&R proposals, and a planning application is expected to be submitted in the summer. Work on the planning application for the Mass Rapid Transit scheme is being progressed with the objective of submitting the application towards the end of the year. A public drop-in session is due to take place on Tuesday 19th July between 13.00 and 19.00 at the Waterside Centre in Thames Valley Park to gain feedback on the MRT scheme prior to the school summer holidays. This will enable feedback from the informal consultation to be incorporated into the scheme design prior to submission of the planning application.
- 4.18 Preparation of the full scheme business cases for the P&R and MRT schemes are being progressed and both assessments are anticipated to be submitted to the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November to seek full financial approval for each scheme.

National Cycle Network Route 422

- 4.19 National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 422 is a proposed cross-Berkshire cycle route between Newbury and Windsor. The route would provide an enhanced east-west cycle facility through Reading, linking to existing cycle routes to the north and south of the borough.
- 4.20 The scheme was granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2015. Preferred option development has been undertaken and detailed design for the scheme is currently being undertaken, focused initially on the provision of a shared path on the northern side of the Bath Road between the Borough boundary and Berkeley Avenue. A programme for delivery of the full scheme is being agreed between project partners, however it is anticipated that the works in Reading will be able to commence during the current financial year subject to detailed design work being completed.

Third Thames Bridge

- 4.21 A Third Thames Bridge over the River Thames is a longstanding element of Reading's transport strategy to improve travel options throughout the wider area. A group has been established to investigate the traffic implications and prepare an outline business case for the proposed bridge, led by Wokingham Borough Council and in partnership with Reading Borough Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and Oxfordshire LEP.
- 4.22 The Wokingham Strategic Transport Model is currently being updated to enable the modelling and business case work to be undertaken, and a bid is

being prepared to the DfT to seek funding to undertake the next stage of the business case work for the scheme.

- 4.23 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and approve the undertaking of the informal planning application consultation for the East Reading MRT scheme.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

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

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

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The projects have and will be communicated to the local community through local exhibitions and Council meetings.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Statutory Consultation will be completed in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 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.

- 8.2 At the relevant time, the Council will carry out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise on all projects.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The costs associated with delivery of the Park and Ride schemes and the Cycle Hub are met by the DfT Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

9.2 The revised funding package for South Reading MRT Phase 1A scheme comprises of £800k from the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Growth Deal and £200k local contribution from the Integrated Transport Block..

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee reports.