

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	3 JULY 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	8
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 (Cow Lane bridges)
- Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes - Green Park Station, Southern and Eastern Mass Rapid Transit, TVP Park & Ride and National Cycle Network Route 422
- Other Schemes - Reading West Station upgrade 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.

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 previously to this Committee, 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 completed a value engineering exercise alongside a 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).
- 4.3 The value engineering exercise 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 Network Rail confirmed in December 2016 that they are required to carry out a full procurement process in order to identify a suitable contractor to construct the scheme. Tenders have been received by a number of bidders and are in the process of being assessed. Upon completion of that process and award of tender Network Rail will be in a position to confirm the overall programme. The outcome for the award of tender is anticipated by the end of July 2017 with an anticipated start on site for works in September, after the Reading Festival. Officers have initiated dialogue with Network Rail regarding traffic management requirements for the scheme, including for demolition of the old railway bridge, with the objective of minimising disruption to the travelling public for the duration of the works.
- 4.5 Officers will continue to update Members on the latest position with this scheme.

Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes

Green Park Station

- 4.6 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 Royal Elm Park mixed use development.
- 4.7 The scheme was granted financial approval by the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2014. Design work for the station is being progressed in partnership with Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR) to ensure the station complies with the latest railway standards. Design work for the multi-modal interchange and surface level car park is being progressed in parallel with the station design work.
- 4.8 It was agreed by the Berkshire Local Transport Body in July that an additional £2.75m funding from the LEP's unallocated capital pot should be allocated to Green Park Station. This will ensure that passenger facilities at the station can be enhanced in line with the increased anticipated demand for the station due to the level of proposed development in the surrounding area.
- 4.9 A bid has been submitted to the New Stations Fund for £2.8m additional funding, which if successful would further improve passenger facilities at the station. A decision on this proposal has been delayed and is now anticipated after the General Election.
- 4.10 The programme for station opening in December 2018 is currently being reviewed in partnership with Network Rail and GWR due to delays in the design work to date which is being undertaken by Network Rail.

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.11 South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a series of bus priority measures on the A33 corridor between Mere Oak Park & Ride and Reading town centre. The scheme will 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 as the scheme will create additional capacity for public transport.
- 4.12 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. Construction of Phase 1A was completed in December 2016. This initial phase of works involved 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.

- 4.13 Construction works for Phase 1B and 2 of the scheme commenced on-site in April 2017 and good progress is being made to date. This involves the creation of outbound bus lanes between the junctions with Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island) and Imperial Way, linking to the Phase 1A scheme. Off-peak land closures will be required to facilitate construction works which are scheduled to be completed in November 2017.
- 4.14 Phases 3 and 4 of the scheme, between Rose Kiln Lane and Longwater Avenue, were granted programme entry status by the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) in March and the full business case is due to be submitted to the BLTB in November to seek financial approval for the scheme.

TVP Park & Ride and East Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.15 Thames Valley Park (TVP) Park & Ride is a proposed park & ride facility off the A3290 being led by Wokingham Borough Council. East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed public transport, walking and cycle link between central Reading and the TVP park & ride site, running parallel to the Great Western mainline, being led by Reading Borough Council. Both schemes were granted programme entry status by the BLTB in July 2014.
- 4.16 A consultation was undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council during November 2015 regarding the TVP park & ride proposals, and planning permission was granted by Wokingham Borough Council in November 2016.
- 4.17 A consultation for the MRT scheme was undertaken during July 2016, including a public drop-in session which took place on Tuesday 19th July between 13.00 and 19.00 at the Waterside Centre in Thames Valley Park. The exhibition was also on display at the Civic Offices and feedback has been incorporated into the scheme design. Submission of the planning application is due at the end of June 2017.
- 4.18 Preparation of the full scheme business case for the MRT scheme is being progressed and the assessment is anticipated to be submitted to the Berkshire Local Transport Body in July 2017 to seek full financial approval for the MRT scheme. This is subject to the outcome of the independent assessment of the business case by the LEP and their assessors.

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. The scheme was granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2015.

- 4.20 Preferred option development has been undertaken and detailed design for Phase 1 of the scheme is complete, which is the provision of a shared path on the northern side of the Bath Road between the Borough boundary and Berkeley Avenue. The first phase of works commenced in February 2017 which are progressing well, including construction of raised tables at Southcote Road and Honey End Lane which have been completed.
- 4.21 Concept design options for the remaining phases of the scheme, through the town centre and to east Reading, are currently being developed in consultation with local interest groups and Ward Councillors.

Other Schemes

Reading West Station Upgrade

- 4.22 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.
- 4.23 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.
- 4.24 Unfortunately, the bid to the Local Growth Fund to support Phase 2 of the scheme was unsuccessful. Therefore, at this time, the Council will continue to explore other potential funding sources alongside Network Rail and GWR.

Third Thames Bridge

- 4.25 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.
- 4.26 Production of the outline strategic business case for the scheme is being led by Wokingham Borough Council on behalf of the Cross Thames Travel Group. Unfortunately, the bid to DfT for funding to produce the full business case was not successful. Therefore, options to progress the development of the scheme are currently being investigated by the joint group.

4.27 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

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 None relating to this report.

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 None relating to this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee and Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee reports.